

BIBLE THEMES

by
J. C. Choate

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INTRODUCTION

This series of articles first appeared in a column under the title, **BIBLE THEMES**, in a weekly newspaper, *The Belzoni Banner*, in Belzoni, Mississippi, USA, back in 1956-58. The editor of the paper made the space available to the church free of charge.

While working in New Delhi, India it was decided that this material would be printed in book form for the work there, and the first edition appeared in 1974. The second edition was printed in Singapore for the work in that area. Now it is being printed in the USA. It is my prayer that it will be of use both to the Christian and to the non-Christian.

Being originally written mainly for people with a denominational background, the subjects deal primarily with the church, the plan of salvation, and themes that are often misunderstood by the religious world. An attempt is made in each brief lesson to present the truth and correct any error or false teaching that is involved in the particular subject under consideration.

The whole purpose is to communicate the truth in an easy and believable format. With the points made, and with the scriptures to support them, those who would like to pursue the matter further are encouraged to do so.

Please keep an open mind as you read and study, and let God's word be the final authority on any statement of doctrine and practice. With a desire to know God's will, I would hope that these words would lead you to the acceptance of the same.

J.C. Choate
Box 72
Winona, Mississippi
January 15, 2005

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THE BIBLE

The Bible is the book of books; it contains the history of man, both good and bad; it reveals his present condition, and assures all that there is life beyond the grave.

The Bible is made up of sixty-six books and is divided into two sections : the Old Testament which contains thirty-nine books and the New Testament which contains twenty-seven books.

The Bible is inspired of God. The apostle Paul tells us, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness : That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Since all scripture is inspired of God then we are to believe every word of it, and moreover, obey the same.

The Bible is sufficient and complete within itself. It is not to be added to, subtracted from, or substituted for in any way. (Rev. 22: 18, 19; Gal. 1:7-9). Then, listen to Peter : "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." (1 Pet. 4:11).

The Bible is filled with good news. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell of the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God. By reading and studying these books one may be led to believe in Christ. Then upon turning to Acts, he may learn how to obey the Lord and be added to the church. (Acts 2). Furthermore, twenty-one epistles emphasize the Christian life, while the book of Revelation pictures things that are to come.

The Bible contains the truth. It has ever been the best seller

and may it ever remain such. Read this book and study this book, and above all, let it be your guide in all that you say or do.

THE OLD COVENANT

The Old Testament is simply the Old Covenant, a covenant that God made with His ancient people; it contains thirty-nine books and is divided into five books of law, twelve books of history, five books of poetry, and seventeen books of prophecy.

Many people are under the impression that the Old Covenant is still binding. However, Christ came to fulfill the law, and to take it out of the way. Christ explained, in the Sermon on the Mount : “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” (Matt. 5:18). Again, we read : “And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.” (Lk. 24:44). Then on the cross, the Lord said : “It is finished.” (John 19:30). Yes, the Lord fulfilled the Old Testament and with His death upon the cross he took it out of the way. Paul had this to say : “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” (Col. 2:14). But what happened after the law was nailed to the cross? With the death of Christ, a new law was instituted—the New Testament. Listen to this : “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17).

There is a difference in the Old Testament and the New Testament. One cannot obey both laws; and further, to leave the law of Christ in order to go back to the law of Moses is but to fall

from grace. (Gal. 5:4).

THE NEW COVENANT

The New Testament is simply the New Covenant, a covenant that God made through Jesus Christ; it contains twenty-seven books and is divided into four books that deal specifically with the life of the Lord, one book of conversions, twenty-one books that have to do with the Christian life, and one book that pertains to the world to come.

God made a will, which we refer to as the Old Testament, but after a time He decided to make another will, and that will became known as the New Testament. Now since God made a new will, that means the first will or testament is no longer binding. Further, it took the death of Christ to do away with the first testament and to make the second testament binding. We read, concerning Christ : "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that we under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead : otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." (Heb. 9:15-17).

Just now, let's consider the question : Of what value is the Old Testament to us? Paul, in speaking of the sins of the Old Testament people, had this to say : "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." (1 Cor. 10:6). Hence, the Old Testament serves as an example.

Friends, keep in mind that we are living under the New Testament, the law of Christ. Therefore, we are to hear the Lord, believe in Him, and obey Him, ever walking according to His will. (Heb. 5:8, 9; Rev. 22:14).

THE COMING OF CHRIST

With the fall of man, God seeing that he was without hope, promised to send His Son. In Gen.3:15 we have a record of the first promise that was made : "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Thus, the promise was made and hundreds of years afterward the promise was kept in the person of Jesus Christ.

Between the first promise and the actual coming of Christ, God promised Abraham that through his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed. This promise was repeated time and time again. Also the prophets of God pointed to the coming of Christ. They foretold the birth of Christ, His works, His death, etc. Of course, the many promises that were made and the many prophecies that were uttered came to pass with the birth of the Messiah.

As to the birth of Christ, we read : "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS : for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21). "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." (Lk. 2:7). Yes, the Saviour was born, but then what? The Lord grew up, at all times interested in spiritual matters, but the last years of His life were spent in performing miracles to convince all that He was the Son of God. Finally, He was nailed to the

cross and there died for the sins of the world. After the death, burial and resurrection, Christ appeared before a number of people and then ascended to the Father in Heaven, where He now reigns as KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Through Christ there is salvation, but one must meet certain conditions in order to be saved. The Lord laid them down and we must meet them—faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. (Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:38).

THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST

The New Testament reveals that Christ performed many miracles. Evidently then, there was a purpose for such. Hence, the question : Why did Christ work miracles? The answer is simple—to make believers. No, Christ did not perform miracles just to be doing something, just to be healing people, but for a purpose : that all might be convinced that He was from God, and therefore, the Saviour of the world.

Not only were the miracles in Jesus' day for the purpose of making believers, but many of those miracles were recorded, and thus, we have them in written form, but they still serve the same purpose. Please note : “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book : But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” (John 20:30, 31).

The Lord had the power to perform miracles and passed that power on to His apostles. (Mk. 16; Acts 2). But with the coming of the written word miracles were no longer needed, and there-

fore, they ceased to be. (1 Cor. 13; James 1:25).

We hear a lot of talk in our time about “divine healers,” “miracle performers,” etc., but such people are nothing more than quacks. Paul warned : “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” (2 Tim. 4:3, 4). No, there are no miracles being performed in our day and all would do well to recognize such. If one wants a real miracle then let him turn to the New Testament and read how the Lord was the one who performed it.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

The Lord lived among men approximately thirty-three years and was crucified. But why did He have to go to the cross? Of course, the Son of God was unjustly tried and crucified by a wicked mob, but the main purpose of the cross was for the saving of mankind. The world was lost and without hope as it was, thus, God sent His Son in to the world to live and die upon the cross that the world might be saved. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” (John 3: 16, 17). “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8).

The cross of Christ stands out throughout the New Testament; it was on that cross that the Lord shed His blood, and thereby, assures all that come in contact with that blood, the remission of their sins. Christ said : For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

(Matt., 26:28). But when does one contact the blood? Upon obeying the Lord. Listen : “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38). Friends, if you want to be saved then you are going to have to obey the Lord. Remember that.

Again, the Bible tells us that Christ shed His blood, and thus, purchased the church. It was the apostle Paul who said : “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28). The church, then, is blood bought.

The cross brought salvation; accept it through obedience.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

After the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, he appeared to the apostles and presented them with the Great Commission. Matthew’s record of that commission reads : “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” (Matthew 28:18-20). Then Mark’s record of the same commission reads : “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mk. 16:15, 16). At one time the Lord issued a limited commission, but now presents the apostles with the Great Commission.

But why is this commission called the Great Commission? Because it takes in the whole world. The Lord told the apostles to preach the gospel to the world, to every nation, and even to every creature. The apostles were to carry the gospel to all in order that souls might believe and be baptized, and thereby, be saved by the grace of God.

The Great Commission has been binding ever since the Lord presented it to the apostles, and will ever be binding, yea, even unto the end of the world. Dear friends, we are living under that world wide commission even now and we should thank God for the same. One may not only believe and be baptized, but upon being saved, may go forth proclaiming the gospel of Christ by word and by deed.

Friend, hear the Lord's will, obey it, and then spend the remainder of your life in spreading glad tidings among men.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH

Christ said: "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18). Notice that Christ says that He is going to build His church; not your church or my church, but His church. Did He keep His promise? He most certainly did. If you will turn to Acts 2 and begin to read then you will find that a large group of people were assembled on the day of Pentecost along with the twelve apostles. You will further learn that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, and they begin to speak in other tongues or different languages. Then it was that Peter and the apostles preached the gospel for the first time in fact. That is, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ was taught for the first time in fact. Hence, those that were assembled, at least many of them, were pricked

in their heart and cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:37, 38). Further : “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” (Acts 2:41, 47). Yes, Christ established His church on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 33, and it has been in existence ever since. My friend, are you a member of the church that Christ established? If you are not, then you are in the wrong church.

You are invited to investigate the church of Christ, and if you will but do this then it is believed that you will want to be a part of the church that Christ established. You are invited to worship this Sunday with the church of Christ's choice.

THE ONE CHURCH

The Bible teaches that there is but one church. How many? Just one. But there are many churches or denominations. Which church is the Bible church or the Lord's church? Well, that question is easy to answer since the Bible church is the church that wears the name of Christ. Hence, the church of Christ is the one church of the Bible. There's no doubt about it; there is but one true and scriptural church and that being the church of Christ. But what about all of the other churches? They are but man-made, and therefore, unscriptural.

You ask for proof? Well, that's fine because I want to back these statements up with the word of God. In Eph. 4:4 the apostle Paul says : “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as

ye are called in one hope of your calling.” Get it now! The writer says that there is but one body. But what does that prove? Turn with me to Col. 1:18 and I’ll show you : “And he is the head of the body, the church : who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have preeminence.” Now Paul says that the body is the church. But we have already learned that there is but one body. Hence, since the body is the church and there is one body, then that means that there is but one church. The terms body and church are used interchangeably. The body is the church or the church is the body. Now that’s simple enough, but remember there is but one body, yea, there is but one church.

But what about the name of the church? There is but one scriptural church, therefore, it wears the name of Christ. Paul, in speaking to the Corinthians, said : “Now ye are the body of Christ.” (1 Cor. 12:27). But the body is the church. Thus, Paul simply said : “Now ye are the church of Christ.” Think on these things and investigate the church of Christ.

IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH

We often hear the statement that the church is not important. Some reason that one can be saved out of the church as well as in the church. Then others say that one can be saved and go home to heaven without ever being a member of the church. Now friends, I grant you that such may be true when it comes to denominational churches, but I am telling you that there’s not a word of truth to such when it comes to the Lord’s church. In previous studies we have learned that Christ established the church, and moreover, he established only one. Now at this time I am suggesting that that church is important, and I am not only going to suggest such, but I am going to prove it by the Bible.

Get your Bible and turn with me to Acts 20:28, and read with me as the apostle Paul says: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Now what about it? Is the church important? Well, the apostle Paul says that it is. He says that Christ shed his blood in order to purchase it. Get it now! The church is so important that Christ shed His blood in order to purchase it. Hence, the Lord's church is a blood bought institution. To say that the church is not important is to say that the blood of Christ is not important. The very fact that Christ established the church makes it important; the fact that the saved are added to the church makes it important; and the fact that Christ is saviour of the church makes it important. (Matt 16:18; Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23).

Friends, don't ever be guilty of saying that the Lord's church is not important. Remember that the church is important, so important that one must become a member of it to be saved in this world and in the world to come.

THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

As far as denominationalism is concerned there are certain individuals who have set themselves up as being the head of this church or the head of that church. But as we have already learned, there is but one church and that is Christ's church; so the important question is this: Who is the head of this church? Well, let's see. Turn with me to Eph. 1:22, 23 and hear the words of the apostle Paul, as he says: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Hear him again: "And he is the head of the body, the church : who is the

beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18). The writer continues: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church : and he is the saviour of the body." (Eph. 5:23). Hence, these verses of scripture tell us that Christ is the head of the church.

Woe be to the individual that would set himself up as being the head of the Lord's church. Not only so, but woe be unto anyone that would bow down to a man and recognize him as being the head of the church. Of course, such is being done throughout the world but you can be sure of one thing, and that is, that the condemnation of the Lord rests upon such people. God did not intend for any human being to be the head of the church, but the Lord established the church and therefore he is the head of it, yea, the one and only head of the church. There may be fakes or counterfeits but Christ is the true head of the church.

Friends, do you recognize Christ as being the head of the church? If you do not then you are in the wrong church. Become a member of the Lord's church, the church that recognizes Christ as being its head.

FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

Many think of their church as being that institution founded upon a certain human being who may be living, or who may not be living. Such a church usually boasts of its articles of faith, creed, manual or discipline. But what does the Bible teach along this line? The word of God tells us that the church has a divine foundation, and that being Jesus Christ the Son of God. After Peter had confessed Christ as being the Son of God, the Lord replied: "And I say also unto thee. That thou art Peter, and upon

this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matt. 16:18). Christ merely stated that He would build His church upon the confession that He was the Christ. Hence, Christ is the rock or the foundation on which the church was built or established.

Again, we read : “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 3:11). There is no doubt about it then; the Lord is the foundation—the foundation of the church. Then Peter says: “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” (1 Pet. 2:4, 5). In other words, the writer is saying that Christ is the foundation, and individual Christians are lively stones. Thus, putting them together they constitute a spiritual house of the church of Christ. (1 Tim. 3: 15).

Are you a member of the church that was founded upon Christ? Are you a member of the church that still recognizes Christ as its true foundation? If not, then you are a member of a man-made organization, and therefore, one day it will fall in ruin. To build upon the Lord then hear his will and obey his word. (Matt. 7:21-27).

SAVIOUR OF THE CHURCH

There are many reasons which can be given to stress the importance of the church but one of the most outstanding is the fact that Christ is the saviour of the church. Now let me show you what I mean : the church is important because Christ is the saviour of it, but if Christ is the saviour of the church then it

stands to reason that one must be a member of the church to be saved. Again, for a person to say that he is saved and yet not a member of the church of the Bible then it is that such a soul is but confessing that he has been deceived in religious matters.

Now for proof on this matter let us turn to the inspired word of God. Paul says: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." (Eph. 5:23). The body has reference to the church. Hence, the writer is simply saying that Christ is the saviour of the church.

Since Christ is the saviour of the church then how could anyone go so far as to say that the church is not important? Only an unbeliever would dare say such a thing. To say that the church is important is not to deny Christ but rather to magnify Him. Then again, to say that one must become a member of the Lord's church to be saved is not to reject Christ as the saviour but rather to accept Him as the saviour. Now what about you? Where do you stand on this matter? Are you guilty of making light of the Lord's church? Well, you'll have to answer these questions but keep in mind that Christ is the saviour of the church.

In closing I am suggesting that if Christ is the saviour of the church then all man-made churches stand condemned. Let the Lord be true and every man a liar.

NAME OF THE CHURCH

Since Christ established the church then it is only right that it should wear His name. Christ said: "I will build my church." (Matt. 16:18). In other words, the church was to be established by Christ and ~~was~~ established by Him even as promised. (Acts 2).

Therefore, we have the church of Christ. That is, the church belongs to Christ, and as a result, wears His name.

Paul, in speaking of the various congregations of the Lord's people, sent this salutation to the church at Rome : "The churches of Christ salute you." (Rom. 16:16). But someone is ready to say: "But that does not say anything about the church of Christ; the writer is referring to the churches of Christ, or the various denominations that existed at that time." My friend, you are mistaken. There was but one true church in Paul's day. However, there were a number of congregations of that one church even as I suggested. But think about this : Wherever there is a plural there must of necessity be a singular. Hence, the plural is : the churches of Christ. Therefore, the singular would have to be : the church of Christ. If not, then why not?

If you would like more proof then consider this statement in connection with the Lord's people at Corinth : "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1 Cor. 12:27). The same writer tells us in Col. 1:18 and Eph. 1:22, 23 that the body is the church. Hence, the body of Christ is nothing more than the church of Christ.

Considering these facts, there is but one conclusion : Any church that would wear any name other than the name of Christ could not possibly be the Lord's church. Are you a member of the church that wears the name of Christ? If not, then investigate the church of Christ by turning to the word of God, and thus, learn the truth about the church for yourself.

"ADDED TO THE CHURCH"

One cannot join the Lord's church. Now it is true that an

individual may join a denominational church or a man-made organization, but I repeat, one cannot join the church of the Bible. How then can one become a member of it? The Bible tells us that if one will but obey the Lord then he will add that soul to his church. For instance, on the day of Pentecost, after a number of souls had obeyed the truth, we read : “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” (Acts 2:47).

If you joined some church then you can mark it down that it is not the Lord’s church. Again, if you hear somebody talking about joining this church or that church then you can safely conclude that that individual does not know what the Bible teaches about the church and about becoming a member of it. My friend, you may play around with man-made churches but you cannot play with the Lord’s church and at the same time become a member of it.

No, you do not have to join the church of the Bible but upon obeying the Lord then he takes care of the matter by simply adding you to it. No, you will not have to worry because if you have met the conditions of salvation then you are automatically added to the greatest body on earth—the body of Christ or the church of Christ.

Neither will you have to worry about being voted into the church; that is, if you have obeyed the gospel, because Christ does not leave it to man to say whether you should be a member of the church or not but he takes care of the matter Himself. Thus, you can be sure that if you are saved then you were added to the one church of the Bible and even at this very minute you are counted with the Lord’s people, that is, if you have been faithful to Him.

Think on these things and accept only the truth.

WHAT THE CHURCH IS NOT

Some people have strange notions about the church. There are those that think of the church as being one thing, while others reason that it is something else. In other words, many believe that the church is the meeting house or the church building. Still others refer to the church in the sense that it is a social institution. Some men go so far as to say that the church is not important. That is, the theory goes that one can be saved in the church, but also, one can be saved outside the church. Hence, there are many opinions and theories about this great institution.

Contrary to the belief of many, the church is not a material house or a meeting place, but rather the Lord's body. The church then is made up of those people who have obeyed God, and as a result, are thought of as being the children of God. Speaking of this very thing, the man of God says: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1 Cor. 12:27). The Bible also teaches that when one obeys God then he is added to the church. (Acts 2:47). That just means that when one obeys the truth then the Lord simply adds him to those that are already Christians, or children of God, or those who already make up the church.

Again, the church is not merely a social institution in order that people might become a part of social activities. But on the other hand, the church is a blood bought institution and souls are to become members of it, not just to be socially entertained, but for the purpose of being saved. (Eph. 5:23).

Finally, I am suggesting that people who teach that the church is not important are mistaken. The church is important. Even as I submitted in the foregoing paragraph, one must become a member of the Lord's church to be saved.

WHAT THE CHURCH IS

Since the Lord's church is not a material building, a social institution, a denominational body, and so on, then we might discuss what the church is. To begin with, the word "church" means "the called out." In other words, the church consists of a group of people who have been called out from the world, and consequently, have met the conditions of salvation or conditions of church membership.

The Bible speaks of the church as being a kingdom, a body, a household, and so on. Moreover, the church is called the church of God, the church of Christ, the church of the firstborn, as well as other names. Keep in mind now that there is but one scriptural church; however, it has a number of names by which it may be called. Hence, the church is to wear the name, or the names, that are to be found within the Holy Bible. Please remember that.

As already suggested, the church is made up of those who have left the world for the joy of serving God. Therefore, when one obeys God or when one becomes a Christian then he is automatically added to the church—the Lord's church. Since one is added to the church upon being saved or becoming a Christian, then it stands to reason that one must become a member of the Lord's body in order to be saved in this present world and in the world to come.

The church belongs to the Lord. He established it; He is its foundation; He is the head of it; He adds the saved to it; He is the saviour of it, etc. The church is the Lord's body, a glorious body, without spot or wrinkle that shall never be destroyed. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." (Heb. 12:28).

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Bible has quite a lot to say about the kingdom. Not only so, but the kingdom of God seems to be a very popular subject in the realm of religious minded people. Since such is the case then there are many theories as to what it is, the kind of work that it is to do, and so on. Hence, we come to a very important question : What is the kingdom? In answering this question please consider Matt 16:18, 19. It reads : "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven : and whatsoever thou shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Now according to these two verses of scripture the terms kingdom and church are used interchangeably, and therefore, are one and the same. In other words, the kingdom of God is nothing more than the Lord's church or the church of God.

The prophets of God pointed to the day that the kingdom would be set up or established. At the same time, the Lord promised to build His church. Thus, on the day of pentecost the kingdom was set up, that is to say, the church was established even as the prophets had predicted. (Acts 2).

Now to another question : Why does the Bible speak of the church as being a kingdom? Well, such is done in order to stress certain facts. For example, the church is a kingdom in that its members are the subjects or servants of the king. Then of course, there are other reasons why the church is spoken of as being the kingdom of God, and therefore, you should want to be a part of it.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

It took the physical death of Christ in order to eventually bring into existence the spiritual body of Christ. Then the New Testament reveals that the body of Christ is simply the church of Christ. To sustain that statement please turn to Col. 1:18, and it reads : "And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." Next, turn to Eph. 1:22, 23 and read with me : "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." From these passages of scripture we learn that the body is the church, or the church is the body. In other words, they are one and the same. Now friends, this should help us to better understand and appreciate the church.

Now get this : The apostle Paul tells us that there is but one body. (Eph. 4:4). But we have already learned that the body is the church. Therefore, if there is but one body and the body is the church then it is safe to conclude that there is but one church. Then you might ask : Which church is the one church? The Lord's church, of course. As has already been explained, the church is the body and the body belongs to Christ. Hence, Christ has but one body or but one church.

I am sure that you have heard people say that the church is not important. But for a person to say that the church is not important is to say that the body of Christ is not important. Now who would believe that? Not any one in his right mind.

Again, we are told : "But now are they many members, yet but one body." (1 Cor. 12:20). That is, individual Christians are the members of the body and the body is the spiritual body of

Christ or the church of Christ.

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

The Bible pictures Christ as the bridegroom and the church as the bride of Christ. The apostle Paul, in writing to his Roman brethren, had this to say : "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Rom. 7:4). In other words, the Roman brethren had married Christ through obedience to His will. Another way of putting it : the church at Rome was married to Christ.

The apostle Paul, in speaking to his Ephesian brethren, commented : "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church : and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it." (Eph. 5:23-25). Thus, Paul compares the husband and wife with Christ and the church. Along this line, many truths are emphasized.

But how many wives does Christ have? Only one. An individual would be out of his mind to accuse the Lord of practicing polygamy, and yet, many accuse him of that very thing. How? In that they claim that the Lord has more than one church. Friend, are you guilty of such? Think about these matters. The Bible tells us that the church is the bride of Christ. But if the church is the bride and Christ has but one bride, then it stands to reason that Christ has only one church. Now I am sure that you are able to understand that.

Other passages of scripture which deal with these matters are : Matt. 25; John 3:29; Rev. 22:17.

CHURCH ORGANIZATION

The church is composed of many congregations throughout the world. Now such does not mean that each congregation represents a different church, or anything like that, but it just means that the Lord's church consists of many congregations throughout the country, due to the fact, that the territory it covers demands such.

Each congregation of the Lord's church is independent of the other. In other words, there is unity among the various congregations, but at the same time, each congregation recognizes the autonomy of the other. Since this is true, then it stands to reason that the various congregations of the Lord's church are not tied down with political machinery or some sort of ecclesiastical system. Neither do the said congregations look to some religious dictator with earthly headquarters or do they have conventions, or attend conventions, for the purpose of reaffirming or composing new laws for the church.

The organization of the Lord's church is simple. As stated, each congregation is independent of the other. Therefore, each congregation is made up of, or consists of, a number of members. From these members, Elders and Deacons are selected to see after the congregation. (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3). Not only so, but each congregation looks to the Lord as being the head of the church and to the Bible as being their creed book. (Eph. 5:23; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Finally, many congregations keep a gospel preacher in their midst, and others support them in mission fields in order that the church might be edified and the gospel might

be taken to the lost. (Rom. 10; 2 Tim. 4:2; Mk. 16:15, 16). Now this is the Bible way. Think it over and compare these things with the way your church is functioning. The important thing is this : Is your church following God's plan?

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

The preaching of the gospel of Christ is the greatest work in all the world. But who is to do this work? The church. Yes, it is the responsibility of the Lord's church to preach the gospel—to carry the gospel unto a lost and dying world.

Paul has said : “Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ : To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord : In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.” (Eph. 3:8-12). In substance, the writer is saying, that God has revealed his will through the church, and therefore, it is the duty of the church to see to it that the gospel or the truth is taken to every soul the world over. If you would like to have further proof on this please turn to Matt. 28:18-20 and Mk. 16:15, 16 and you will be impressed with the statements just made.

It is the duty of the church to preach the gospel that souls might be saved, but not only so, it is the duty of the church to help the poor, and care for the afflicted. All of this comes in the line of practicing a pure religion before God the Father.

(James 1:27). Then too, the church has many other duties and responsibilities. Such is exemplified in the book of Acts as well as in the various epistles. Think on these matters, but I remind you again to think on them in the light of God's word.

THE GOSPEL

The gospel has reference to glad tidings or good news pertaining to Christ, the kingdom, and salvation in general. Over a period of years the gospel existed only in preparation, promise, etc., but finally in fact.

Many ask the question : "What is the gospel?" Well, the apostle Paul answers that as he speaks to the Corinthians on the same subject : "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also you are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Hence, the gospel contains facts : the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

But the gospel is more than that, inasmuch, as the gospel has conditions or commands that must be met or obeyed. Thus, Christ said : "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mk. 16:15, 16). Therefore, the gospel contains commands : belief and baptism.

Not only so, but the gospel has a number of promises. For

instance, those who will obey the gospel are promised salvation, remission of their sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, all spiritual blessings, and the hope of eternal life. (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Eph. 1:3). Thus, the gospel contains promises : salvation, gift of the Holy Spirit, etc.

Now one must obey the gospel to be saved and to receive the many promises and blessings of God. Otherwise, upon the Lord's return he will take vengeance upon you and all other people like you. (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

FACTS OF THE GOSPEL

According to 1 Cor. 15:1-4 the facts of the gospel are simply the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The Lord died on the cross—died for the sins of the world. After his death he was taken and placed in Joseph's own new tomb. However, the grave could not contain its victim for the Lord arose—Christ arose triumphant over death, hell, and the grave.

The Bible tells us that we must obey the gospel to be saved. (2 Thess. 1:7-9; 1 Pet. 4:17, 18). But how could one obey the gospel? Turn to Rom. 6:17, 18 and read with me : “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sins, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” Thus, we have the Romans obeying the gospel. That is, they were sinners but became servants of righteousness. How did they do it? By obeying the gospel or by obeying that form of doctrine. In other words, the doctrine is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But the form of that doctrine consists of this : of one dying to his sins, being buried with the Lord by baptism, and then being resurrected from the watery

grave to walk in newness of life. So you see, Christ died, was buried, and resurrected. Likewise, every sinner must obey the form of that doctrine by dying to his sins, being buried by baptism, and then being resurrected from the water. It is all quite simple if you will think about it, and let the Bible be your guide.

This is all explained in Rom. 6 : “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death : that like as Christ was raised by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

COMMANDS OF THE GOSPEL

In previous studies we have found that the gospel consists of certain facts—the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. It should also be pointed out that the gospel has certain conditions or commands that must be recognized and obeyed in order for one to be saved.

What are the commands of the gospel? First, one must believe. As a matter of fact, one must believe in God, Christ, and his word. We read : “But without faith it is impossible to please him : for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Heb. 11:6). Second, one must repent. To repent means to turn away from every sin. Christ said: “I tell you, Nay : but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” (Lk. 13:3). Third, one must confess Christ. That is, one must confess with the mouth before men that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Listen to the words of Paul : “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Rom. 10:10). Fourth, and finally, one must be baptized. The Bible tells us

that baptism is for the remission of sins. Peter, in speaking to the people on the day of Pentecost, had this to say : “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38).

Since there are specific commands of the gospel then it is to be understood that an individual must obey the gospel in order to be saved. The Lord said as much, in presenting the great commission to the apostles, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved : but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mk. 16:15, 16).

PROMISES OF THE GOSPEL

The gospel has facts; the gospel has commands; but the gospel also has promises. Then the question comes : “How may one have access to the promises of the gospel? Through believing the facts and obeying the commands of that same gospel.

Since the gospel has promises or blessings then this question would automatically follow : What are some of them? In the first place, those who will obey the Lord have been assured that they will be saved, or receive the remission of their sins. Christ said : “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mk. 16:15, 16). Then Peter said : “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38). There is no doubt about it then; if one will but carry out the Lord’s will then he may be blessed with salvation; otherwise, he will be lost.

Another promise which comes through the gospel is the gift of the Holy Ghost. As just stated, Peter explained that all who would repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins would be blessed with the gift of the Holy Ghost. This is also brought out in Acts 3:19 and in Acts 8 where the Eunuch obeyed the gospel and went on his way rejoicing. Still another promise is that of all spiritual blessings which are in Christ. Through obeying the gospel one is baptized into Christ and in Christ one is blessed with the many spiritual blessings. Paul explained it like this : "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 1:3). Finally, through obeying the gospel there is the promise of eternal life. You may read of this in John 14:1-6 as well as many other passages throughout the Bible.

HEARING

One must hear the will of God before one can obey the Lord. Hence, we must put first things first and acknowledge freely that hearing the truth presented in its purity and simplicity is most important. One may learn the truth in two ways—by hearing the gospel preached by word of mouth or by studying the will of God. In either case one is hearing the truth.

The above is stressed by Paul in the following : "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear with a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith

comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom. 10: 13-17). Who said the preacher is not important? Who said that hearing is not important? Well, there’s one thing for sure, the apostle Paul did not say that. The inspired man affirms that they are important.

Just now let’s check up on these matters. Christ said : “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32). The truth will save one or make one free, but before it can do that one must know the truth in order that he may obey it. Thus here is where the preacher and the importance of hearing come in. Remember now that the hearing is important, but even so, one must not only hear the truth but one must obey that truth in order to be saved. Hearing is important but that’s not enough. Hearing **the truth** is important but that is still not enough. Again I suggest that one must **obey** the truth in order to be saved.

FAITH

In order for one to obey the gospel of Christ then faith must be produced within his heart. But how does this faith come? To be sure, it is not produced by some miracle or some experience. Neither does it come by some direct measure of the Spirit, etc. Really, faith is produced in one’s heart as a result of hearing the word of God. This is the truth about the matter inasmuch as Paul affirms it. Listen : “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom. 10:17).

As already implied, faith is very important. To back this up by the scripture then please listen to this : “But without faith it is impossible to please him : for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently

seek him.” (Heb. 11:6). Yes, faith is so important that Paul says that one cannot please God without it. Hence, he explains that one must believe that God exists and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. But it is not enough to believe in God for the Lord himself tells us that we must believe in him likewise. Now consider the Lord’s statement : “Let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in me.” (John 14:1). One might believe in God and still be lost. Therefore, if one wants to be saved then he must not only believe in God but in Christ as well.

Faith is a pre-requisite of salvation. For instance Christ said : “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mk. 16:15, 16). Now faith only will not save, but one must have faith in order to be saved. (Rom. 10:10). Also, the Bible tells us that faith is a work and by works is faith made perfect. (John 9:29; James 2:24-26). Think on these matters, and above all, accept the truth in relation to the same.

REPENTANCE

Repentance is another command of the gospel. The Lord emphasized the necessity of obeying this command; so did certain of the apostles such as Peter, Paul, and so on. Furthermore, repentance defined simply has reference to a change of heart or a turning point. In other words, when an individual repents of his sins then it can be said that he has turned away from all sins, or that he has turned his back upon all sin.

Now hear the Lord on this subject : “I tell you, Nay : but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” (Lk. 13:3). After

the saviour made this statement he explained that repentance and remission of sins should first be preached in the city of Jerusalem. (Lk. 24:47). Now to show you that repentance is related to the gospel, listen to the language of the apostle Peter as he spoke to thousands of people on the day of Pentecost in preaching the gospel for the first time in fact : “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38). But then you might want to know : “Who should repent?” All men everywhere. I know this to be the truth inasmuch as the apostle Paul affirms it : “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17:30). Hence, according to the will of God one must repent of his sins in order to be saved.

There are those who contend that faith only saves but according to be Bible one must express his faith by repenting of his sins. Not only so, but one must exercise his faith in relation to the other commands of the gospel as we shall see in the articles to come. Keep in mind now that the commands of the gospel are faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. One must obey this gospel to be saved. (Mk. 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38).

CONFESSION

There are several commands of the gospel and all of them are important—equally important. In our past studies together we have noted three of them and now we come to another—that of confessing Christ as being the divine Son of God.

To prove to you that the confession is of importance in regard to salvation, please listen to the words of Christ: “Who-soever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess

also before my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 10:32). Who would say then that the confession is not important? Not one soul; that is, if that soul is interested in being saved. But now let’s go on to another statement and this time it is the apostle Paul who speaks : “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Rom. 10:10). Please note that the man of God says that the confession is to be made with the mouth, and likewise, that the confession is to be made unto salvation. In other words, when one confesses Christ it does not mean that he is already saved, but by his confession he is in a position to further his obedience to the gospel and thereby be saved.

Now to illustrate the truths already presented please turn to Acts 8:36, 37. In this setting we have Philip preaching the gospel to the eunuch. After Philip had presented the truth to this man the story continues in this manner : “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water : and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Then it was that Philip baptized the eunuch. Now a question : Have you made this confession? If not, then confess Christ and obey the gospel today.

BAPTISM

The final command of the gospel is baptism. This command is just as important as the others, contrary to the doctrines of men. Many would have you to believe that you can be saved apart from the act of baptism but I am going to show you by the Bible that this is not the truth.

Peter says : “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth

also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (1 Pet. 3:21). Now what did Peter say? He says that baptism saves. Would you like to dispute his word? Well, if you say that one can be saved without baptism then you are doing just that. Shame on you if you are that kind, and moreover, may the Lord have mercy on your soul in order that you may see your mistake before it’s too late.

Again, we read, and this is the Lord speaking : “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mk. 16:16). In other words, belief plus baptism equals salvation. Both commands then must be obeyed in order for one to be saved. To leave off either belief or baptism would mean damnation. Please remember that.

Once more the apostle Peter speaks : “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38). Now when does one receive the remission of his sins? After he has repented and has been baptized. That’s what the apostle said.

Friends, the Bible teaches that one must be baptized to be saved. Now you may not believe it, and you may reject it, but that is not going to change the Bible. Listen, when you are dead and gone the word of God will still teach the same. Believe it and obey it.

THE MODE OF BAPTISM

Many people think of baptism as being sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. Such people reason that one is just as good as the other—the important thing is to be baptized. To question those

who believe such is only to be met with a ready answer from Webster's Dictionary. The explanation is as follows : "Webster defines baptism to be sprinkling, pouring and immersion." But those poor souls must have forgotten that Webster is not presenting a Bible Commentary but rather is defining terms according to modern day usage.

Multitudes of people accept sprinkling and pouring as baptism without question. Since such is true then let's ask this question : What does the Bible have to say on this subject? Well, there's one thing for sure, and that is, the Bible nowhere states or even hints to sprinkling and pouring as being baptism. On the other hand, the Bible teaches that baptism is immersion.

The word baptism comes from the Greek word baptizo which means to dip, plunge, immerse, or to completely overwhelm one. When we turn to the scripture we find the apostle Paul saying : "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." (Col. 2:12). The same writer speaks of this further in the first portion of Rom. 6. Then, too, we are told that Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. (Acts 8). In Eph. 4:5 we are told that there is one baptism, and that baptism is a burial in water.

Sprinkling and pouring are unscriptural when it comes to baptism. There has never been one soul saved through following such a procedure. Only Bible baptism saves. (Mk. 16:16).

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

To begin with, the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of the Holy Ghost are one and the same. This is pointed

out due to the fact that many people misunderstand this just like a great host of people misunderstand this kind of baptism from the very beginning. For that reason we should want to make a study of this theme.

You hear a lot of people talking about how they were baptized with the Holy Spirit, and so on, but such people have been deceived. It is impossible for one to receive that kind of baptism in our time inasmuch as it was done away with many hundreds of years ago.

Now only the apostles were promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13), and on the day of Pentecost the Lord kept his promise by pouring the Spirit out upon the apostles. (Acts 2). However, later on Cornelius and his household were baptized with the Holy Spirit in order to convince the Jews that the Gentiles had been accepted of God. (Acts 10). These are the only two cases of Holy Spirit baptism recorded in the New Testament. But what about all the other people? They were baptized in water, and there upon received the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38). Thus, there was a difference.

Briefly putting it : Christ was the administrator of this baptism—the Holy Spirit was used in the baptism—the subjects were apostles and Cornelius and his household—and finally, the purpose was to guide the apostles in all the truth, and in regard to Cornelius and his household to express the impartiality of God. Hence, leave Holy Spirit baptism where God put it. To do otherwise is but to sin against God.

THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

Honest souls have been heard praying for fire baptism but

that is one baptism which all should want to avoid. Of course certain religious people think of such a baptism as being a means of destroying their evil thoughts or those impurities that may still dwell within them. However, the baptism which is under consideration has reference to the wicked being cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:10).

Upon turning to the scripture, we read the words of John the Baptist : "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees : therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance : but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear : he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire : Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner : but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matt. 3:10-12). Now in this portion of scripture John explains his baptism and then discusses that which Christ will have power to do upon his coming. Thus, he stated that Christ would have the power to baptize them with the Holy Ghost, and that was demonstrated by sending the Spirit upon the apostles, etc., therefore blessing the world through the same. But John continues by suggesting that Christ would also have the power to baptize them with fire. Note that a comma separates the Holy Ghost portion and the fire portion. Hence, two different baptisms were under consideration. Such is illustrated in the following verse in regard to the saving of the wheat and the burning of the chaff. In other words, the baptism of fire.

THE ONE BAPTISM

Yes, the Bible teaches that there is but one baptism. (Eph. 4:5). The apostle Paul made this statement in about 64 A.D.,

many years after the apostles, etc., were baptized with the Holy Spirit. Since the baptism of the Holy Spirit was limited to the apostles and Cornelius and his household then it will have to be acknowledged that the man of God was speaking of water baptism as being the one baptism.

Furthermore, we know that sprinkling or pouring could not be the one baptism of the Bible inasmuch as scriptural baptism demands a burial. (Clo. 2:12). Neither can the baptism in water, for any reason other than the remission of sins, be scriptural because the one baptism of the Bible is for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38).

The one baptism of the Bible also puts one into Christ : “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (Rom. 6:3). Likewise, scriptural baptism puts one into the body of Christ : “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12:13).

Then too, the one baptism of the Bible is the new birth. (John 3:3-5). That is, one must be baptized in order to be born again. Such takes place when one goes down into the water and then comes up out of the water. In this case a burial takes place but a birth is also registered. Finally, this one baptism of the Bible must be administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as recorded in the great commission. (Matt. 28:19, 20).

BAPTISM SAVES

Contrary to what the majority says, the Bible teaches that

baptism saves. Now you may not like it; you may denounce it; you may protest it; but the fact still remains that the Bible teaches that baptism saves. Of course you may want to know : "How could baptism save?" Well, the Lord has said that baptism saves and that should be sufficient for all. To doubt the word of God is but to express infidelity.

Yes, baptism saves. Christ taught : "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mk. 16:16). Thus, baptism saves only when it is preceded by a scriptural faith. Certainly the Bible teaches that baptism saves but the Bible nowhere states that baptism only saves. Therefore, as suggested, baptism saves only when it is brought on as a result of a true faith in God and his will. On the other hand, the lack of faith, or the lack of belief, will damn one.

Again, the apostle Peter wrote : "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 3:21). We know according to this that baptism saves. There's no doubt about it. But does this mean that baptism only saves? No, it does not. Peter says no such thing. Now to understand this one must keep in mind that there are many other verses of scripture which have to do with the subject of salvation. Thus, as stated previously, baptism saves only when it is preceded by faith, etc. Now consider these statements in the light of God's holy word.

BAPTISM FOR REMISSION OF SINS

The doctrine is widely propagated that one is to be baptized because of the remission of sins. In other words, it is said that one is saved before baptism, but after obtaining salvation the

individual should be baptized to express such. Now for a question : Does the Bible teach such a doctrine? The answer is NO. As a matter of fact, the Bible teaches the opposite. Listen now to the words of Peter : "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:38). Now what is it, Peter? The inspired man tells us that one must repent and be baptized in order to obtain the remission of sins. Also, the little word "for" means "in order to obtain" as used in Matt. 26:28.

To say that one can receive the remission of sins apart from baptism is but to further acknowledge that one can obtain the remission of sins without repentance. Such would have to follow inasmuch as repentance and baptism are coupled together by the word "and." To say that one can be saved without the one is but to say that one can be saved without the other. Hence, repentance and baptism are going to have to be accepted together for the remission of sins, or they are going to have to be rejected together, along with the complete will of God. Now good friends, what are you going to do about this matter? Are you going to accept man's theory, or are you going to stay with the word of God? Of course you may want to know : "How could one obtain the remission of sins by repenting of his sins and being baptized?" Because the Lord said so. Therefore, if one believes what the Lord has said he will obey it and receive the remission of sins accordingly.

BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Some people will tell you that if baptism saves Christ is not the Saviour. But such people are sadly mistaken. To say that one can be saved apart from baptism is but to say that one can

be saved without Christ. I know this is true inasmuch as the apostle Paul has said : “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (Rom. 6:3). Thus, the Bible teaches that one is baptized into Christ. But to say that one can be saved without baptism is to say that he can be saved outside of Christ, yea, without Christ altogether. I am sure that you can see that.

Paul speaks once more in regard to these matters and he has this to say : “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Gal. 3:26, 27). Now where are the children of God? In Christ; that’s for sure. But how does one get into Christ? Through the act of baptism. Surely then, you can see the importance of baptism. One, of necessity, must be baptized in order to enter Christ.

Now there is one way of entering Christ and that is through baptism. The Bible nowhere teaches that one may enter Christ through faith only or through prayer only, and so on. Furthermore, one cannot be saved without baptism because one cannot be saved outside of Christ. To reason that an individual can be saved without baptism is but to argue that one can be saved outside Christ and then later on be baptized to enter Christ. However, such would be optional to those who believe such a doctrine. Thus, you can see the absurdity of false doctrine. The Bible plan is far more simple : Through scriptural baptism one enters Christ.

BAPTIZED INTO THE BODY

The Bible emphatically states that one is baptized into Christ. (Romans 6:3). The Bible likewise teaches that one is baptized

into the body of Christ, or the church of Christ, which is the spiritual body of Christ. In other words, the same act that puts one into Christ also puts one into the body of Christ, which is the church of Christ. As suggested, that act is baptism.

Turning to the word of God, we read. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:13). The same writer tells us that the body and the church are identical. (Col. 1:18). Thus, the man of God is simply saying "for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" or "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one" church. This is a further indication of the importance of baptism, and in light of the foregoing statements, one can hardly deny that.

A certain theory has it that baptism is unimportant. But to be a member of the Lord's church then one must be scripturally baptized. Another theory states that one can be saved apart from the church. But again, if one is scripturally baptized, then it is, that he is automatically a member of the New Testament church. Hence, you can see how closely related baptism and the church are. To leave off one is but to reject the other, and yet, to accept one is but to accept the other.

Yes, the Bible teaches that one is baptized into the body or into the church. But how could one be baptized into such an institution? Well, the Lord expects an individual to obey him, and thus, when one obeys the Lord then he adds him to the church. You see, baptism is a command of the Lord, and all who would be saved (and members of the Lord's church) must obey that command.

THE NEW BIRTH

There is much talk on the subject of the new birth. Multitudes of honest souls have been deceived in regard to this all important matter. Still others are asking about the new birth; they are anxious to find out what it is, etc. With this in mind, let us turn to the scripture and listen to a conversation which took place between Jesus and Nicodemus. We read : "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews : The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God : for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh : and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:1-7). Now for some reason many think that the new birth has reference to the physical birth but such people are wrong about the matter. Nicodemus made the same mistake and the Lord explained to him that the new birth has to do with the soul of man. But what must one do in order to be born again? He must obey the gospel of Christ. That is, he must believe and be buried with the Lord in water through the act of baptism in order to become a new creature. If you do not believe it then please read and study Mk. 16:16 and 2 Cor. 5:17. Furthermore, if you will read Rom. 6:3-6 you will find that one must be buried with Christ by baptism. Through such a procedure there is a resurrection, or a birth, and in this case, a new birth.

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

Many people want to know : “Why was Christ baptized?” The answer is very simple—“to fulfill all righteousness.” We know this to be a fact inasmuch as the Lord himself offered this as an explanation. In other words, Christ was baptized in order that he might serve as an example for others to follow. Had Christ not been baptized then no doubt many would have refused baptism on the basis of the Lord’s pattern.

There are those who reason that baptism does not save because Christ was not baptized to be saved. It should also be pointed out that neither was he baptized because he had been saved. So you see, one cannot follow Christ’s example of baptism when it comes to the matter of salvation before baptism, or salvation after baptism. The Lord’s baptism merely serves as an example of the act of baptism itself.

A further study of the Lord’s baptism reveals that it was a burial. How do we know? Well, the record says that after the baptism he “went up straightway out of the water.” We know that he would not have been down in the water for the purpose of being sprinkled or having some water poured on his head. The point is, he was buried in water through the act of baptism.

Another thing that stands out about the baptism of Christ is the fact that God spoke his approval. Not only so, but all who will follow the Lord’s example will have divine approval of the same. Now to further meditate on these matters you may consider Matt. 3:13-17. Please do not take these things too lightly, but rather take them to heart.

“JOHN’S BAPTISM”

During the days of John the Baptist he preached “the bap-

tism of repentance for the remission of sins.” (Lk. 3:3). This was a matter of preparing the people for the coming of “the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 3:2).

A number of things stand out in regard to John’s baptism. First, it was the very first baptism to ever be publicly proclaimed. In other words, John was the first to introduce baptism to the world. Second, it required much water, and therefore, was a burial. Third, this baptism ceased with the coming of the baptism of the great commission and the establishment of the church.

John the Baptist received such a title because he baptized people. That is, he was John the Baptist or John the immerser. Furthermore, John baptized many many people, including Christ himself. All of this goes to show that John was following divine guidance in relation to these matters.

As suggested, John’s baptism ceased with the giving of the great commission. In Acts 19 the record reveals that a number of people, who had been baptized according to John’s baptism, were asked to be baptized again, but this time, according to the baptism of the world wide commission. We know by this that John’s baptism is no longer considered the scriptural baptism.

Now some people still maintain that John’s baptism is the baptism of the New Testament. However, such people are mistaken. John’s baptism served its purpose and then ceased. At present there is but one baptism, and I say again, it is the baptism of the great commission. (Eph. 4:5; Mk. 16:16, 16).

THREE KINDS OF WORSHIP

Thousands of people, even millions of people worship God.

The sad part about it though, is the fact that some people worship God one way and some another, and so on. Frankly speaking, there are three kinds of worship, but only one of those kinds is acceptable to God.

IGNORANT WORSHIP. Multitudes of people are ignorantly worshipping God. Such souls have never come unto a knowledge of the truth. The apostle Paul came across this class of people when he visited the great city of Athens. We read : “Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” (Acts 17:22, 23).

VAIN WORSHIP. There is no doubt about it. The majority of the people who claim to believe the Bible are nothing more than vain worshippers. Such people worship God but their worship is according to the doctrines and commandments of men. Christ spoke of a group of people of this sort when he said : “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” (Matt. 15:9).

TRUE WORSHIP. The Bible upholds but one kind of worship and that is true worship. The Lord outlines it as follows : “God is a Spirit : and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24). Every Christian must worship God in this manner in order to please the Lord.

What about your kind of worship? Is it a scriptural worship? If you are going to worship God then you should endeavor to worship him according to those things which are written.

IGNORANT WORSHIP

It is one thing to worship and it is another thing to worship God. Still further, it is one thing to worship God and quite another thing to worship God in an acceptable way. Think about this, and while you are doing it, please consider your own worship.

All people are religious in one way or another. With that in mind, then you can understand why the majority of the people worship. No, I did not say that all worship is acceptable to God. I could not say that because a great number of those who worship, worship not God. Of course, I am aware of the fact that there are certain poor souls who advocate that just so long as an individual is honest and sincere then his worship is acceptable with God, but I must beg to differ with such people.

Multitudes of souls who worship, worship ignorantly. Thousands and thousands of people do this simply because they have never had the opportunity of hearing the pure truth of God. Such people remind me of those on Mars' hill. (Acts 17:22, 23). Then there is another large class who worship in this manner inasmuch as they have been deceived concerning the New Testament order. The apostle Paul at one time was in this condition and even confesses the same. (1 Tim. 1:13). In other words, Paul was ignorant of the truth at one time, but when he learned the will of God, then he immediately obeyed that truth.

My friend, what about you? I am sure that you are not bowing down to some man-made idol, but I am wondering if you are worshipping God according to the scripture, or are you worshipping God according to what some man, or group of men, have had to say? Investigate these matters and it will do you a lot of good.

VAIN WORSHIP

Christ, in speaking of a certain class of religious people of his time, had this to say : “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” (Matt. 15:9). Now here we have a group of people who were worshipping the Lord, but at the same time, their worship was in vain. In other words, their worship was void, empty, to no avail. But why was this the case? Simply because their worship was after the doctrines and commandments of men.

Not only were there such people in the Lord’s day, but there are many of them living in our age as well. It seems that there has ever been a group of people who had rather follow man’s plan in religious matters, than to bow down to God’s law. However, such poor souls have never gained anything from that type of worship, and moreover, they never will.

We are told constantly that it makes no difference how a man worships just so long as he is honest and sincere. I want you to know that if such were the truth, the Lord would have never condemned those poor people of long ago. Not only so, but if such were the truth then I am quite sure it would be clearly stated within the scriptures. But such a doctrine is false. It **does** make a difference how a person worships God. For one’s worship to be acceptable with the Lord then it must be in harmony with the will of God all the way.

The majority of those who worship God are vain worshippers. Why? Because multitudes of religious people are worshipping the Lord according to the doctrines and commandments of men. For instance, many worship God with mechanical instruments of music. Others fail to partake of the Lord’s supper, etc., etc.

TRUE WORSHIP

The scriptures read : “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth : for the Father seeketh such to worship him.. God is a Spirit : and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23, 24). In this portion of the word of God we not only have revealed the Father’s desire for true worshippers but we also have a statement regarding that which constitutes true worship. The Lord’s point here is very plain : “And they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

To worship God in spirit merely means that one must worship him with understanding. That is, one’s worship must have significance or meaning to it. Like Paul said on one occasion : “I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.” (1 Cor. 14:15). To worship God in truth simply has reference to worshipping God according to the scriptures, or the will of God. For example, when it comes to the matter of giving then one must give strictly in adherence to 1 Cor. 16:2, etc. One must worship God in spirit and in truth.

True worship involves five specific acts of worship which are abundantly dealt with in the pages of the New Testament. These acts of worship are namely : praying, studying, singing, partaking of the Lord’s Supper, and giving as one has been prospered. (1 Thess. 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:15; Eph. 5:19; Acts 20:7; 2 Cor. 9:7). Now as already mentioned, each act of worship must be dealt with in truth. Please remember, God will accept but one kind of worship and that being true worship, the kind of worship herewith discussed.

BIBLE STUDY

One of the acts of worship is that of studying the word of God. The Christian is not only expected to study the scriptures in the privacy of his home but he is also expected to assemble on the Lord's day with his fellow brethren for this specific purpose. Through such study and meditation he is strengthened and edified spiritually. This enables him to be faithful to the Lord, and at the same time, places him in a position to teach those with whom he associates.

In the long ago Paul instructed the young preacher Timothy to : "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15). Now if such was needful then, it is needful now. Hence, we have a good reason for assembling on the Lord's day, and that being, for the purpose of following up Paul's exhortation.

Be it remembered that our study must be in spirit and in truth. Such is necessary if our worship along this line is going to be acceptable. In other words, as we study we must keep our minds on our job, or another way of putting it, we must understand that which we are doing. In the next place, our study will have to be according to the truth. Therefore, we must study the scripture, rightly dividing it, not adding to it, or subtracting from it, etc.

Of course, the purpose of our study will be to worship God, and to learn all we can about his word. It is not the Lord's will that we should assemble to study politics, world affairs, to make a book report, and so on, but that we should study the will of God. As we read and study his word, he speaks to us and reveals his will to us. Through such God will be honored and glorified.

PRAYER

Another act of worship is prayer. As with Bible study, the Christian is expected to pray at every opportunity, but at the same time, the Lord would have him to assemble each Lord's day for the purpose of praying with fellow saints. There is power in prayer and the child of God must recognize this fact to be the kind of person who would please the Father in heaven.

The Bible repeatedly states the importance of prayer. For instance, Paul says : "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. 5:17). That is, one is to pray as often as possible, to always have the spirit of prayer. Again, the scriptures read : "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." (1 John 5:14). John is merely saying that our prayers will be answered if they are only in harmony with the Lord's will.

Acceptable worship demands that we worship God in spirit and in truth. Since prayer is an act of worship it stands to reason that our prayers must be in spirit and in truth. To pray in spirit means that one must pray with knowledge, or understanding, of that which he is doing. For a person to allow his mind to wander while praying means but one thing, and that is, his prayer is in vain. Further, to pray according to the truth means that one must pray according to the word of God, as already stressed.

Christ tells us that men should always pray. (Lk. 18:1). Thus, it is wonderful to know that a Christian has the privilege of speaking to God through the name of Christ. He may do this whenever and wherever he chooses. Since such is true it is no wonder that one of the acts of worship is prayer.

SINGING

The religion of Christ is a singing religion. The Lord has commanded His people to assemble on the first day of each week for the purpose of singing praises to His name. Thus, singing is another act of Christian worship.

Singing is only mentioned about eight times in the New Testament, and yet, it is clearly set forth as being part of true worship. For instance, the apostle Paul says : “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” (Eph. 5:19). The same apostle continues : “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Col. 3:16).

True worship demands that the Lord be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Paul said on one occasion : “I will sing with spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.” (1 Cor. 14:15). Now the truth about singing is this : the New Testament only authorizes one kind of music and that is vocal music. That is the reason Paul asked the Ephesians to sing and make the melody in their hearts. Hence, if the Lord’s people are going to worship God in spirit and in truth then they must worship him in this manner.

But someone wants to know : “What about mechanical instruments of music in worship?” As already suggested, the New Testament nowhere authorizes that kind of music. Yes, the majority of religious people use mechanical instruments of music, but you can mark this down, every soul that worships God with such strange music is only worshipping God in vain.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

One of the main reasons that the Lord's people assemble on the first day of the week is for the purpose of partaking of the Lord's Supper. In the long ago the Lord instituted the Supper on this manner : "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you; I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matt. 26:26-29).

We have an example of where the early disciples met on the first day of the week to break bread : "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." (Acts 20:7). Therefore, if the early Christians met on the Lord's day to break bread it stands to reason that we are to follow their example.

The apostle Paul has something to say on this subject, and we read : "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." (1 Cor. 11:26-29). Every soul then should think seriously on this subject.

Some religious people advocate the Lord's Supper should

be partaken of only once a month, once every three months or once a year, and so on. However, the Bible teaches that the Lord's Supper should be observed every Lord's day. Why should this follow? In order that the Lord might be remembered. To miss the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week would be the same as missing Bible study, prayer, etc.

GIVING

The final act of worship, that we will consider in this series of studies, is that of giving. As with the other acts of worship, the Lord would have his people to assemble on the first day of the week for the purpose of worshipping him through giving. We know this is the Lord's will because we have an example of where Paul exhorted the Corinthians to do this very thing. (1 Cor. 16:1, 2).

In order for us to understand the importance of giving then let us turn to the scriptures. For instance, Paul says : "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." (1 Cor. 16:2). The same writer continues : "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity : for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9:7). Now what do we have? From these verses of scripture we learn that we are to give on the first day of the week; every Christian is to give; each is to give of his means; each must give as he has been prospered; such giving will eliminate emergencies; the giving is to be purposed in the heart, "not grudgingly, or of necessity : for God loveth a cheerful giver."

Many religious organizations practice tithing. Still others pervert the Lord's will by having a collection every time they

meet, and some times, a number of collections in one service. Not only so, but those same organizations often have pie suppers, etc., to raise money. Friends, all such is foreign to the Lord's will. The Bible plan for giving has already been presented, so therefore, you are asked to consider it and accept it that the Lord might accept you.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

It is important that one become a member of the Lord's church; it is likewise important that one be just a Christian and nothing else. However, there is more. If one would be saved in this world and in the world to come it is necessary that he live the Christian life, yea, a faithful Christian life.

The New Testament contains twenty one letters that deal specifically with Christian living. If this is not enough to prove the importance of such living then it would be hard to convince anyone of the same. And yet, in light of the New Testament teaching on the subject there are still those who accept such a doctrine as "once saved always saved," etc.

Peter informs us that after one becomes a Christian he is to add to his faith the Christian graces. (2 Pet. 1:5-11). Then Paul says that if one is going to fight the good fight of faith it is imperative that he put on the whole armour of God. (Eph. 6:10-20). Add to this the works of God, such as working out one's salvation, and thus you can see that a great deal is involved in living the Christian life. (Phil. 2:12).

When one becomes a Christian it means that all of his past, or alien sins, have been blotted out. On the other hand, such does not mean that he is saved for time and eternity, regardless

of how he lives. To become a Christian means that one is just getting ready to do something for the Lord. In other words, when one obeys the gospel he is merely qualifying himself to live a Christian life, and speaking of such a life, the Lord has said : "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10).

THE JUDGEMENT

The inspired writer has said : "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Heb. 9:27). Yes, all must die sooner or later and then one day all will appear before the judgment bar of God. Knowledge of this should behoove each one to prepare to meet his God. (Amos 4:12).

The apostle Paul tells us that Christ will serve as the righteous judge. We read : "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent; Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead," (Acts 17:30, 31). In that same way the Word will judge, for the Lord has said : "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him : the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12:48).

The scripture further reveals that each one will be judged according to his works : "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. 5:10). Works are important then; if one has the works of God to his credit then it means that he will be saved.

Yes, the judgment is coming. All will be there : the rich,

the poor, the righteous, the evil, the educated, and the uneducated, etc. The Lord pictured the judgment like this : “And these (the evil) shall go away into ever lasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal.” (Matt. 25:46).

WORKS

There are many kinds of works. For instance, there are : good works, bad works, works of our own righteousness, the works of God, the works of the Devil, the works of the Spirit, the works of the flesh, etc. The Bible speaks of all of these from the standpoint of importance or condemnation.

It has been said that all works are of the Devil, but is this so in light of what the Bible has to say on the subject? It has also been said that works will not save anyone, but according to the foregoing statement this deserves our most careful consideration.

One must understand that salvation depends largely on two factors—God’s part and man’s part. Now God’s part is that of grace but man’s part is that of faith, or works. (Eph. 2:8, 9). In other words, God has promised to save all of those who will meet the conditions of salvation, or those who will obey him.

Of course, we know full well that one cannot be saved by doing his own works, or the works of the law, and so on, but on the other hand, the Bible tells us that one can be saved by doing the works of God. This is why the apostle Paul exhorted the Philippians to : “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” (Phil. 2:12). Was Paul exhorting them to do something that they could not do? No, a thousand times no. Paul was simply explaining to them that through their faith the works of God should be made manifest.

In closing, please consider Paul's plea while speaking to the Corinthians : "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. 15:58).

WORKS OF THE LAW

The works of the law will not save. That is, the works of the law of Moses will not save one from sin. Now an individual may endeavor to do the works of the law, but there's one thing for sure, he'll never be saved through such an effort. Paul brings this up as he writes to the Ephesian brethren. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God : Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8. 9). The works under consideration have reference to the works of the law of Moses. This is so inasmuch as the context tells us so. But note that Paul suggests that if one could be saved by the works of the law then he would have room to boast. How's that? Well, the law of Moses is no longer binding since Christ died on the cross in order to set forth a new law. Hence, if one could go back to the law and do the works of the law and be saved by the same then he would have room to boast. Thus, he could say that he was saved without Christ, yea, that he didn't need Christ.

It is sad to know that multitudes of people do not know the difference between the law of Moses and the law of Christ. Thus, such people not only claim to be followers of Christ but also boast of the fact that they are keeping the Ten Commandments, etc. What are they doing? Expressing their own lack of knowledge. So it is impossible for one to keep two laws at the same time, when one has been taken out of the way that the other may stand. No, one cannot be saved by doing the works of Moses.

Keep in mind now : just because one type of works will not save that does not mean that all works stand condemned.

WORKS OF OUR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS

The works of our own righteousness will not save us in this world or in the world to come. The great apostle Paul presented this truth many years ago, when he said : “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” (Tit. 3:5). Now the writer did not intend to condemn all works inasmuch as he specifies the type of works that is under consideration, being specifically the “works of righteousness which we have done.”

There has never been one soul saved on the basis of his own works, that is, works that are considered apart from God's will. Not only so, but there never will be a soul saved on such grounds as that. No doubt about it, there are those who have been led to think that such is possible and surely there will be others who will place all of their confidence upon such, but souls of that nature are blind to the truth. There is a big difference in the works of one's own righteousness and the works of God.

If one could be saved by the works of his own righteousness then that soul would have room to brag. Yes, he could boast of his works, and at the same time, let the world know that he did not need Christ for the purpose of being saved. However, one cannot be saved through his own devisings but it takes the works of God to save one from his sins. Moreover, it takes the works of God to save a soul from sin and give him hope of a better world. In other words, God's grace is extended only to those who have enough faith to do his will, and consequently, those who will do the works of God.

WORKS OF THE FLESH

All works are not of God and a good example of that is the works of the flesh. The scriptures read : “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Gal. 5:19-21). Please note that the writer says that “they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

There's one thing for sure : a number of works of the flesh are recorded in Gal. 5 but not all of them; however, the apostle does not overlook such in that he slips in the little phrase “and such like.” Hence, the works of the flesh that are enumerated stand condemned in the sight of God, and not only so, but all works that are similar to them, or those works which may be rightly referred to as the works of the flesh.

The works of the flesh are not of God, therefore, one cannot engage in them and expect to please God. Such works will not save one but will rather condemn him in this life, and also, in the world to come. Perhaps the thing that keeps man from God more than anything else is worldliness for the apostle John has said to love the world is to love not God. (1 John 2:15). Be it remembered, then, that the works of the flesh will destroy but the works of the Spirit will save.

WORKS OF THE SPIRIT

On the one hand the Bible talks about the works of the flesh

and on the other hand it speaks of the works of the Spirit. Thus, one can readily see the contrast in the different works that are mentioned in the inspired word. Surely one would not condemn all works in view of the foregoing statement, but at the same time, freely acknowledge that there is some bad and some good in just about everything.

In speaking of the works of the Spirit or the fruit of the Spirit, the apostle Paul wrote the Galatians : "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law." (Gal. 5:22, 23). The inspired writer would have us to understand that if we are walking according to the Spirit, then such fruit will surely be borne.

Some would even dare to use their tongue for the purpose of opposing all works. This has been done and is being done, every single day that goes by. But who would dare condemn the work of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, etc. and so on? Not a soul I am sure, because those who condemn works preach that one must love, believe, as well as the other things that are mentioned. And yet, for a person to come blindly along and condemn all works without one condition, then that soul is openly declaring war on the God of heaven, and not only that, but is contradicting himself on every turn. Such is nothing more than ignorance gone to seed.

Friends, the purpose of this lesson is to show you that all works are not of the devil but there are works of the Spirit, etc. Such works are important to your salvation and mine. Please understand this fundamental truth.

GOOD WORKS

Paul wrote the Thessalonians : “Comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.” (2 Thess. 2:17). Thus, these people were to abound in every good word and work. Consider, if you will, the subject of good works.

What does the Bible mean when it speaks of good works? Well, any work that is of God could be classified as a good work. Also, the little phrase “good works” suggests that all works are not good, but rather, there are bad works. Hence, any work that is not of God may be said to be a bad work.

There are many good works. For instance, the helping and caring for the poor is a good work; the preaching of the gospel is a good work; giving money for the purpose of building a meeting house is a good work, and so on. But now get this : In order for these things to be considered as good works they must be done by the authority of the Lord. In other words, one cannot do them in one’s own name and still consider them as the works of God. Please read Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 3:21.

Sometimes man may consider a certain work as being a good work, and yet with God it may be just the opposite. Therefore, it should be stated again that in order for a work to be good it must be in the name of the Lord. All should strive then to abide by God’s word, ever working for the Lord, so that he may hope for a better life in the hereafter.

There are too many bad works now, so endeavour to do the works of God. Then, too, don’t be guilty of condemning those works which God has endorsed—those works which one must do in order to be saved in this world and in the world to come.

NEGLECT NOT YOUR SALVATION

It is so easy for a person to drift through this life without obeying the gospel of Christ. The average individual intends to obey the truth but somehow just never seems to get around to it. Such a soul never seems to get to the point where he is altogether persuaded to become a Christian, but is continually waiting for a more convenient season. Such is merely negligence on the part of that individual—yet it could spell his eternal condemnation.

Good neighbor, it is a dangerous thing to neglect your salvation. If you know what the Bible teaches in relation to becoming a child of God; if you know your duty when it comes to living the Christian life; if you know what you should do as a sinner, or as a Christian, then you are acting foolishly unless you immediately do that which you know that you should, and must do, in order to please the Lord.

In the long ago, the man of God said : “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.” (Heb. 2:1-3). Thus, the writer pleads with us to abide by those things which we have heard : in our case, the written word. He then asks an important question and the answer is very obvious : “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”

“NO CONDEMNATION”

We read : “There is therefore now no condemnation to them

which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Rom. 8:1). Now this is a wonderful verse of scripture, and especially so, since it is directed to the Christian. However, as with many other verses of God’s word, this portion of scripture has been misinterpreted and misapplied many, many times. There are those who read, “There is therefore now no condemnation” and that’s as far as they ever go. But what are such people trying to do? Simply attempting to show that if one is saved then there is no condemnation; that is, he will never be condemned. But the Bible doesn’t teach such a doctrine and neither does this verse of scripture.

If one would understand Rom. 8:1 he must read all of it. Paul informs us that there is no condemnation, but to whom is he speaking? “To them which are in Christ Jesus.” But does that mean that if one is in Christ he will never be condemned? Certainly not, because Paul explains that this applies only to those “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” He infers that if one walks after the flesh the condemnation of God would rest upon him; but on the other hand, if he will walk after the Spirit he has the Lord’s assurance that he will not be condemned, but rather blessed accordingly.

Now you may ask : “How can I get into Christ?” Paul also answers that question when he says : “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (Rom. 6:3). The apostle verily answers a question with a question. So one is baptized into Christ and as long as he walks after the Spirit he has the Lord’s promise that he will not be condemned.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Man is prone to put such things as his work, family, etc.,

first in his life, but according to the Lord there is something more important than that. Christ said in the sermon on the mount : "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6:33). Again he said : "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciples." (Lk. 14: 26). These verses of scripture emphasize this fundamental truth, and that is, the Lord will not accept second place. If we are going to serve the God of heaven, or walk in the steps of his beloved Son, we will have to put him first in our lives, in all that we say or do.

Too often we overlook the important things of life because we are too concerned about those things going on about us, but we should keep in mind that the worthwhile things are not to be found in the realm of the material or physical but rather in those things which are of a spiritual nature. Thus, God should reign pre-eminently within our hearts, Christ being our king, the Bible our guide, and the work of the church being our daily task, with heaven as our goal. With such a schedule one could hardly go wrong.

Christ taught : "...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it : and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:24-26). Friends, we'll do well to ponder the Lord's statements.

REVERENCE

The term reverence applied to God simply means profound respect mingled with love and fear. Thus, to reverence God is to offer him honor, praise, glory, adoration, and so on. Another way of looking at it : to reverence God is to bow down before him in complete subjection to his will. In the long ago, the Psalmist David said : "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." (Ps. 89:7). The same writer continues : "...holy and reverend is his name." (Ps. 111:9).

Man should show reverence for God's word. He should realize that God speaks to him through the written pages of inspiration. Hence, the scriptures should never be lightly dealt with or perverted in any way whatsoever. All who read the Bible should do so with great humility, and all who listen as it is being read should be as quiet as possible, realizing that it is the Almighty who is speaking. The apostle Paul has exhorted us to study and at the same time assured us that the scriptures completely furnish man unto every good work. (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16, 17). The Lord adds to these truths by stating that the word will never pass away, but one day will judge the world. (Matt. 24:35; John 12:48). Realizing all of this, how could one keep from respecting God's word?

There is a great need of reverence when it comes to worshipping God. Members of the church should make it a point to get to the meeting house as early as possible. After arriving, each member should go into the building and take a seat and sit quietly until worship begins. Then upon entering worship he should honor God in all that he says or does. This kind of worship will not only please the Lord but will be a blessing to all involved. (John 4:24).

WORLDLINESS

The scripture reads : "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof : but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15-17). But continuing : "Ye adulterers and adulteresses know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4:4).

The foregoing passages of scripture emphasize the fact that one cannot love the world and God at the same time; to be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God. Now friends, that is something to think about. No, one cannot get out here and curse, drink, dance, gamble, lie, cheat, run around with somebody's wife or husband and still love God. To love the world is to hate God, but to love God is to hate the world. By world, it is meant the things of the world, or the sins of the world. A few of these worldly things are listed in Gal. 5.

When one becomes a Christian, a child of God, a member of the body of Christ, then it is that he is to live daily for the Lord. Such means that a true Christian does not have any time for those things of the world which are of a sinful and ungodly nature. As a matter of fact, if one lives the life the Lord would have him to live, it will take all of his time, and consequently, he'll have no time for these other things. The Christian life is a full time job.

DANCING

Is it a sin to dance? Many say no. Well, let's look into the matter. Statistics show that thousands upon thousands of young women fall into sin each year, and they list invariably the dance hall floor as being one reason for their downfall. Friends, that is not a very good recommendation for dancing. Yes, it is a sin to dance and don't you let anybody tell you otherwise.

On turning to God's word we find the dance was responsible for John the Baptist's head being cut off. Not only so, but we are able to observe from the writings of Paul that this sin is listed as being one of the works of the flesh. (Gal. 5). In this case it comes under the term of lasciviousness, which has reference to that which is wanton, lewd, and lustful, and as Webster defines it, it has a tendency "to produce lewd emotions." Now if that doesn't describe the dance, what could? Whether admitted or not, dancing is for the purpose of emphasizing sex and this is sinful before God. Oh yes, one may be innocently led into dancing but you just watch that person and see how he or she turns out.

Dancing leads to many other sins, such as drinking, running around with somebody else's wife or husband, and many times to brutality and even murder. And don't misunderstand, it is just as wrong for children and teenagers to dance as it is for adults. Age has little to do with it unless as a person grows older he becomes more sinful and ungodly in such an act. But in thinking about this, you just remember that dancing feet and praying knees do not go together; that you will never see a true Christian dancing. Yes, it is a sin to dance. If not, would you want to be found on the dance hall floor when the Lord returns? Think! Think!

“MODEST APPAREL”

The apostle Paul says : “I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; nor with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.” (1 Tim. 2:8-10). We have people asking the question “is it all right for young girls (and the older ladies) to wear shorts, bathing suits, mini dresses, etc.? Well, the apostle just answered that question in the portion of scripture stated. The writer says that the women should adorn themselves in modest apparel and it is out of reason to assert that one who wears shorts, and so on, is adorning herself in modest apparel. And here is another thought : Paul makes no allowances for hot weather whatsoever. To be godly one must dress decently and those who respect God’s law have no trouble in doing so.

It is a shame and a disgrace the way people dress in our time, especially among the women. Many think when the summer months roll around, that the weather gives them the license to pull off and go just any old way. Many fathers and mothers allow their daughters to parade all over the country, with little more on than that which they entered the world with. Not only so, but even many mothers parade themselves up and down the streets in shorts, hot pants, and what have you, thus not only setting a bad example, but bringing disgrace upon themselves. Friends, this is foreign to the will of God, but it shows the condition the world is in. Many young people will be led into sin because of such a practice. Fathers and Mothers, wake up and save your children from ruin and disaster.

OBEDIENCE

The chief reason why the world is in the condition that it is in, is simply because man has not yet learned the fundamental answer to the question, "Why is it torn asunder by division?" The reason is very simple : Because the majority of people have refused to submit themselves to God's will.

God has always demanded obedience—from the beginning of the world down to this very day. Think about Adam and Eve, Noah and the Ark, Abraham and Isaac, Moses and the people of Israel, and so on. Then come on over the New Testament, the jailor and his household, and the many others who could be mentioned. Now God required one thing of all these people, and that was obedience. Thus, those who obeyed God were blessed but those who disobeyed him had to suffer the consequences. (Rom. 11:22).

Here is something to remember : God says what he means and means what he says. Hence, when God gives a command, he means for it to be carried out to the letter, without addition, subtraction, or substitution. The Hebrew writer adds : "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Heb. 5:9). The only way you can be saved, then, is through obedience to the Lord's will.

Friends, if man would obey God there would be only one church, one worship, one name; all would be working together, and together working for the same place. Believe God's word and obey the precepts thereof.

DOCTRINE OF "DO"

Many people do not like the little word "do." Why? Simply

because it suggests doing something, and you know, the average person is lazy when it comes to religion. Some are willing to sit back on the stool of “do nothing” with the desire to “do less”, and feeling all the while that by the grace of God they will be saved. But what does the Bible have to say on this subject? The word of God emphasizes time and time again the importance of doing the will of God. Yes, one must do something; one must act; one must work in order to be saved.

On turning to James 1:22 we hear the inspired man saying : “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” What is it now? James says that one must be a doer of the word. But what does that mean? It just simply means that one must keep the commandments of the God of heaven. Listen to Christ : “Blessed are they that do his commandments that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” (Rev. 22:14). No doubt about it then, one must keep the commandments of God. But what is it to keep the commandments? It simply means that one must be a doer of the work. James says: “But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.” (James 1:25). But finally, what is it to do the work of God? Christ explains this by saying . “Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 7:21). Thus to be saved one must do, do, do. Yes, the word “do” is little, but it carries a lot of weight.

GRACE

The word grace means unmerited favor; a gift or blessing that is presented to one who deserves it not, or one who is unable

to pay for it regardless of what he offers in return.

When one thinks of grace, he automatically thinks of the grace of God in relation to mankind as revealed in Eph. 2:8, 9. Here the apostle says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God : Not of works, lest any man should boast." It is wonderful to know that God thought enough of us to offer his Son on our behalf. Thus, through God's love and goodness—by his grace he saves us.

Now here is something to think about : Grace "only" will not save anyone. Yes, we are saved by grace but not by grace alone. We know this to be a fact inasmuch as Paul says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith..." It's grace on God's part, but faith on man's part. Grace covers the sending of God's Son, etc., whereas faith covers obedience to God's commandments, and so on. Grace "only" will not save, and neither will faith "only" save. But by putting them together salvation is the result.

No, one cannot be saved of himself, or by doing works of the law. On the other hand, one must believe the Lord to the extent that he will be moved to work out his salvation with fear and trembling. (Phil. 2:12). But even after one has done all that he can possibly do to be saved through obeying the Lord's commandments and by working day and night in his vineyard; even after all of this, if he is saved, it will still be by the grace of God that it is done.

GOD'S LOVE FOR MAN

To mention God's love one is automatically reminded of John 3:16 where the Lord said : "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in

him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” No doubt about it : God’s love has been stated, but above all, it has been proven.

Paul, in speaking to the Romans, stated : “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:8). Yes, while man was still a sinner Christ died for him. Had the Lord not died, man would have been without hope in this world and in the world to come. Mind you, this was true in the days of Christ and the apostles and it is still the case. No, man has not outgrown his need for a saviour.

But in thinking of God’s great love for man, one could hardly overlook the fact that God created us in his own image (Gen. 1: 26, 27); that he sent his Son into this low land of sin and sorrow (Matt. 1:21); that he through Christ presented the gospel to the world (Mark. 16:15, 16); that he through Christ promised and established the church (Matt. 16:18); that he through Christ and the apostles left the word of truth behind in written form; that he through Christ has promised the faithful a home for the soul. (John 14:1-3). Yes, because of God’s great love for man he has done this and much more.

Keep in mind however that just the fact that God loves man, does not guarantee his salvation. It is not enough for God to love man, but in order for him to be saved he must in turn love God. John says : “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.” (1 John 4:8). But to love God is to keep his commandments. (John 14:15).

MAN’S LOVE FOR GOD

Many reason that since God loves all men, he’ll not allow

even one to die and go to hell. But these people need to be reminded of the fact that God loved those who lived prior to the flood, but because of their wickedness and ungodliness they were destroyed. Not only so, but similar cases could be given.

But the question is not, Does God love man?, for we all know that he does. On the other hand, the question is, Do we love God?, and in considering such a question, it seems to get larger and larger. Now to hear the average person talk, he will admit readily, "Yes, I love God." But the question in this case is : How much do you love God? Do you love him enough to keep his commandments? Do you love him enough to be a member of the Lord's church? Do you love him enough to live the Christian life? Do you love him enough to worship him each first day of the week? Thus, when a person says that he loves God, he should consider these questions and others; and as he answers them he'll be able to tell just how much he loves God.

Regardless of whether you love God or not, the Lord himself said : "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15). To love God or his Son, one must keep the commandments of the Lord. But what if he refuses to do that? It just means that he doesn't love the Lord. But what about those who keep the commandments? That proves their love for the Lord. Hence, the Lord tests an individual's love on the basis of whether he keeps his commandments or not.

Friend, do you love God? Remember now, it means more than just saying, "I love God." If you love the Lord, prove that love by keeping his commandments. Do this and he will bless you for it.

MODERN DAY TESTIMONIES

Many of the denominational bodies over the country have what they call testimonial meetings or services. Usually such a proceeding is conducted prior to the sermon, and during this period someone presides over the assembly, calling for the members to testify at will. Upon taking the floor, the gentleman or lady, which ever the case may be, explains to the audience all that the Lord has done, etc., as far as their particular case is concerned. This continues until all have had their say.

We come now to a question : Are modern day testimonial services in harmony with the will of God? Friends, the answer would have to be, NO, inasmuch as we do not have an example of such things within the New Testament. We do have an example of the disciples meeting to worship God, but we do not have an example of any of the New Testament Christians ever assembling for the purpose of testifying. (Acts 20:7). Of course, the apostles and Christians rehearsed all things God had done for them, but not in the sense that people testify in our day.

Here are some reasons why a true Christian cannot go along with modern day testimonial services : (1) God failed to incorporate it into true worship. (2) We have no example of where New Testament Christians ever included such practices in their worship. (3) We cannot truly bear witness, or testify, for the Lord inasmuch as we have not seen him. (4) We are to abide by God's will rather than the testimonies of men. (5) The Public is not nearly as interested in hearing a so-called personal testimony as they are in learning what the Bible teaches.

DIVINE TESTIMONIES

While the Christian cannot go along with the modern day

churches and their testimonial services, nevertheless, he must believe those testimonies which are of a divine nature, as recorded in the book of God. The word testimony defined simply means to make, or establish, a true statement; or to bear witness. Hence, it can be said of the apostles that they did just this, for the apostle John explains : “And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” (1 John 4:14).

No, the apostles, or Christians, did not engage in testimonial services as are conducted in our day, but at the same time the apostles did go forth testifying of the Lord and all that he had done in the sense of preaching the word. They had the power to do this for they were witnesses of the Lord, and consequently the Spirit was guiding them in all truth. And they not only preached the word every where they went, but penned it down in order that we might be blessed with a knowledge of God’s will.

Friends, anytime you want to hear a testimony, you turn to God’s word and let Peter, Paul, and the others testify. Those men of God are still preaching today just like they did back there on the day of Pentecost, on Mar’s Hill, and so on. And something more : You can’t afford to listen to modern day testimonies because they are not in harmony with the will of God; but you’ll never go wrong by heeding those testimonies that are of a divine nature, yea, those things which have been tested and proven to be true.

THE SIN OF DOING NOTHING

No doubt more souls will be lost as a result of doing nothing than for any other one thing. Oh yes, multitudes are busy doing one thing or another in relation to the activities of this world,

but when it comes to the religious realm there is a different picture altogether.

Some reason that they are alright as they are. Still others reason that they know they should become Christians but are simply afraid they can't live up to it. Then others tell us that they have tried, but failed. Hence, the excuses are many, but the reasons are lacking. One may try to excuse himself, and yet, the Lord won't accept such.

The average person is deceived. He doesn't realize that it is just as sinful in the sight of God to do nothing, as it is to dabble in the things of the world. Sin is sin. One might not be found on the dance floor, but he may neglect Lord's day worship; he might not be one to take the Lord's name in vain, but he might fail to call upon the name of the Lord in prayer; he might not hate his neighbor, and yet fail to visit him, etc., and so on. Friends, such a person is sinning just as much as that soul who has not professed Christianity, or that person who lives a life of sin. I say again : sin is sin.

Yes, it is just as sinful to do nothing as it is to do the wrong thing. James say : "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 4:17). The same writer continues : "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James 1:22). The Lord appreciated industrious people; those who will get up and do something. Therefore, be not guilty of doing nothing, but at least be found trying. The Lord will bless you accordingly.

"TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?"

After many had departed from the Lord, "Then said Jesus

unto the twelve, Will you also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” (John 6:67,68). Even as the question was asked in the long ago it is still being asked, but the answers vary.

Some people have gone to Moses and his law. No telling how many people believe that if they will keep the Ten Commandments, they will be saved. But such people are wrong about the matter. Moses and the law will save no one, for Christ is the saviour, and the law has been nailed to the cross. (Matt. 1:21; Col. 2:14).

Some people have gone to John the Baptist. There are those who reason that John established the church, and consequently it too wears his name. But friends, John did not establish a church, and therefore there is not a church in existence that can scripturally wear his name. John was called the Baptist simply because he baptized people. However, it was not until after the death of John that Christ said he would build his church. (Matt. 16:18). But if Christ built the church, and he did, it should wear his name. (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 12:27).

Some people have gone to John Wesley, John Calvin, and other religious leaders. But however great these men may have been, they have not the power to save anyone; however great a role they played in calling man back to the Bible they have not the right to be honored to the extent of having a church named after them, and so on. Read 1 Cor. 1.

“To whom shall we go?” To the Lord himself. For it is even as Peter said, “Thou hast the words of eternal life.” Only the Lord can save us. Hence, we must look to him and his will if we are to be saved.

THE WAY

There is one way. Christ is that way. No, there aren't a number of ways, as some would have us believe. The Lord, in speaking to Thomas about this very matter, said : "I am the way, the truth, and the life : no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6).

It is said that there are many ways to heaven in the same sense there are many ways into a certain city. But friend, what if you should be on a mission and your instruction demanded that you enter a certain city by a particular road? Could you afford to take another route? You know you couldn't and be successful. Hence, there are many who will tell you that you can reach the New Jerusalem this way, and so on. And yet, the Bible teaches that the Lord is the way and that if one is going to heaven, he must take that course.

Again, you can be out traveling and find that you are lost. You stop and ask the way to your destination. As a result, you are given instructions on how to get there. You may be confident that the advice given will take you there but after going a good piece you may learn that you are heading in the wrong direction. The fellow you asked back there evidently didn't know the way to the place you wanted to go. The same is true when it comes to the way to heaven. You may enquire about the way to heaven and you may follow a certain person's suggestion, but instead of taking you in the right direction, it may send you in the other.

Friend, do you want to go to heaven? If you do, let Jesus be your way—the one and only way. Follow the road-map, the Bible, and you'll surely reach your destination—the city of God.

LOVE FOR THE TRUTH

The Lord's word is truth. (John 17:17). The same writer says that the truth makes one free. (John 8:32). Consequently, all should love the truth, not only because of what it is, but also because of what it can do. But what does it mean to love the truth? It means to love God, to love that which he stands for, to obey the truth as revealed.

But I am saddened to say that all people do not love the truth. Many of those who are out in the world despise God's word and that which it stands for. Why? Because such people love the world and the pleasures of this world. (John 3: 19). Evidently they are thinking only of today but they need to read James 4: 13, 14. Not only do the worldly hate the truth, but I must say that many religious people belong in the same category. Yes, the majority of them are honest and sincere but at the same time honestly and sincerely mistaken, as was Saul. (Acts 26:9). These people have been deceived in religion and are now full of prejudice, and thereby, reject the truth even when presented to them. Christ speaks of this class of people as being those who teach for doctrines the commandments of men. (Matt. 15:9). But there is one other group that I must mention : these people are referred to as erring Christians in that they have known the way but have drifted from it. (Rev. 3; Matt. 24:12). Peter says that it would have been better for such people to have never know the truth than to have known it and then turn from it. (2 Pet. 2:21, 22).

Friend, what about it? Do you love the truth? If you do, express it through obedience to God. James says to be a doer of the word. (James 1:22). Not only obey the truth yourself, but if you love it, take it to others. By expressing your love for the truth the Lord will save you and lay up a crown of life for you.

“ARISE”

In Acts 9 the record reveals how the Lord appeared to Saul as he was on his way to Damascus to further persecute the church. It was there that Saul asked what he should do, “And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.” It was in Damascus, after he had fasted three days and nights, praying fervently, and blind all the while, that Ananias came to him, and said, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16). Please note, that in both cases Saul was asked to arise in order that he might obey the Lord’s will.

The little word “arise” suggests action, effort, etc., since it is synonymous with such terms as do, labor, and work. This term grows in stature when you realize that it condemns laziness, the spirit of do nothing, and such doctrines as “waiting on the Spirit,” “praying through,” “grace only,” “faith only,” as well as other theories.

Everyone needs to be conscious of the many opportunities that are around them. Hence, the sinner needs to arise and obey the gospel; the erring Christian needs to arise and return to his first love; the Christian needs to arise and be about the Master’s business; the preacher needs to arise in order that he might spread the gospel; elders need to arise for the purpose of overseeing the flock; yea, the church needs to arise to do the work that God has commanded.

The Lord demands action. This is required if one is to obey the gospel, to confess his faults, to worship God, to live the Christian life, to preach the word, and so on. Thus, arise this minute with determination to do his will.

“FAITH ONLY”

The religious world is plagued with the theory of “faith only.” A lot of people have the idea that the moment one believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, he is saved on the spot, apart from any other act.

Not only do the denominational people take great delight in promoting such a theory, but many members of the Lord’s church, although they do not preach “faith only,” they, nevertheless, practice it, and consequently, must be placed in such a category. For instance, member after member acknowledge the fact that he believes that “such and such” is a fine work, but as for as ever taking an active part in it, he doesn’t. Evidently such people should explain that they believe the work is fine, as long as the other fellow is doing it.

But the point is, faith only is condemned by the word of God. James says, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being along.” (James 2:14-17). He continues, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” (James 2:24).

Good people, it is impossible for a soul to be saved by faith only, whether he be an alien sinner or a child of God. In order for an alien sinner to be saved, he must obey the gospel (Mk. 16: 16), and in order for the Christian to receive a crown of life he must remain faithful unto death, striving daily to work out his salvation. (Rev. 2:10; Phil. 2:12).

THE CHRISTIAN'S JOY

Don't let anybody fool you. The happiest life that one can live is a Christian life. No doubt about it, the Christian must face and solve many problems; he is confronted with one temptation after another, etc., etc. However, weighing all matters carefully, the Christian life is still to be chosen over the life of any other.

The Christian has much to be thankful for. There's God, his Son, the plan of salvation, the Bible, and many other things that he cannot afford to overlook, let alone forget. Through the grace of God he was saved and added to the New Testament church. Like the eunuch of Acts 8 he has gone on his way rejoicing. Why should he be so happy? Because he has been saved and is now a part of the greatest institution on earth, the Lord's church. He is not only free from sin, a part of God's family, but he has the Lord's assurance that he will ever be by his side. He can now pray, worship, and serve God with assurance of a future reward.

The Christian has a bright future before him. Since he is a follower of Christ, a Child of God, a member of the body of Christ, with the hope of everlasting life, he now has a great consolation. Through a godly life, he may influence others along life's way. He has the privilege of worshipping the Lord each first day of the week, enjoying Christian fellowship, and where the family are Christians, the satisfaction of a Christian home. Such a life insures him untold blessings in this world with a hundred fold in the world to come.

"THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN"

The wise man said, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter : Fear God, and keep his commandments : for this is the

whole duty of man.” (Eccl. 12:13). After Solomon had searched the world for happiness, and turned to riches, pleasure, wisdom, and all the world had to offer, he found that all this was vanity, and came to the conclusion that if man would be wise he must fear God and keep his commandments, this being the whole duty of man.

The man of God found it folly to bow to the things of this world, and for the benefit of future generations placed his findings in written form. But to the shame of man, he has pushed aside such wisdom and gone out in the world seeking fame and fortune, thinking that happiness is to be found in what this life has to offer. But instead of filling his heart’s desire, he will only be disappointed. In the end, if he will tell the truth about the matter, he will acknowledge along with Solomon that if man wants to be happy, let him fear God and keep his commandments.

Friends, let me emphasize the importance of fearing God and keeping his commandments. In the first place, man must respect or reverence his creator if he is to keep the commandments. In the second place, man must keep God’s commandments if he respects and reverence God as he should. Hence, for one to be saved he must both fear God and keep his commandments. Truly this is the whole duty of man. You’ll never be challenged with a greater task than this one. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:150). Note, please, **HIS** commandments.

“FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK”

Apart from the “first day of the week” being the day of worship, it was on this day that Christ arose from the grave, and on this day that his church was established. (Matt. 28:1; Acts 2).

With all of this occurring on this great day of the week, the Lord's day, or Sunday as the world now knows it, certainly this day should stand paramount in the lives of all.

For around fifteen hundred years the Sabbath day had stood as the day of worship, but with the coming of a new covenant, a new day of worship was instituted. Instead of the seventh day of the week, from henceforth it would be the first day of the week. (Heb. 9; Acts 20:7). Thus it has stood to this good moment of time.

We have an example of where the early disciples met on the first day of the week to break bread. (Acts 2:42; 20:7). The Christian is also commanded to meet on the first day of the week for the purpose of giving as he has been prospered. (1 Cor. 16:2). Since we have this example and this command pertaining to the day of worship, and the worship itself, we have scriptural backing for meeting on the first day of the week to worship God.

The question comes : "How often should the Christian assemble to worship his creator?" Each first day of the week, since we have an example where New Testament Christians met on that day. But someone says, "It doesn't say every first day of the week." Neither were the Children of Israel commanded to keep "every" Sabbath day holy, but since they were to keep the Sabbath day holy, that meant every Sabbath day. Hence, the Christian is to worship God "each" first day of the week.

"MORALITY ONLY"

Are you one of those who promotes the theory that all one has to do to be saved is to merely live a good moral life? If you are, then give a lot of thought to that which I am going to say.

Good friend, the Bible no where teaches that morality only saves. No doubt about it, one must live a good moral life to be saved, but it does not stop there.

To convince you that I am telling the truth, please consider the case of Cornelius as recorded in Acts 10 and 11. Here was a good moral man, if there is such a thing as a “good man” outside the body of Christ. He gave alms to the poor, prayed to God, and so on. Yet, he was lost and remained lost until he obeyed the gospel of Christ.

Not only do we have the record of how Cornelius and his household was converted to the truth, but we also have such records as the conversion of the Pentecostians, the conversion of the Eunuch, the conversion of Saul, etc. (Acts 2, 8, 9). Morality wasn’t enough to save these people; they had to obey the truth to have the hope of a better world.

Here are some questions for your consideration : If morality only saves why wasn’t Cornelius saved apart from the gospel? If one can be saved through living a good moral life, why did such people as Saul, Lydia, and others, have to obey the gospel? If salvation comes through living a good moral life only, why was the church ever established and the gospel ever presented? Now if the theory of “morality only” holds good, answer these questions for me. Of course, you know you can’t give scriptural answers and therefore the doctrine falls flat.

TEMPTATIONS

A temptation is a test, a way of proving one. To overcome is to be made stronger but to fall could mean eternal destruction. Some are tempted in one way, and some in another, but all are

tempted. (James 1:14).

What we might classify as major temptations are as follows : Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The apostle John warns, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof : but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15-17). Hence, every temptation may be placed in one of the categories listed, and as John explains, one day all of it will pass away.

In passing, be mindful that Adam, Christ, and all people as far as that is concerned, have been tempted through the lust of flesh, the lust of eyes, and the pride of life. Also, observe how the Lord overcame his temptation and follow his example. (Matt. 4:1-11).

Now we come to what we might refer to as specific temptations. For instance, man is tempted in giving, in assembling, in marriage, in business, in conversation, in spirit, and so on. (Gal. 6:1 ; 1 Tim. 6:9). But is there no way of escape? Listen to Paul : "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man : but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. 10:13).

BY WHAT AUTHORITY?

Authority in religion is important. Christ said, "All power (or authority) is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matt.

28:18). Again, Paul says, "And he is the head of the body, the church : who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead : that in all things he might have the preeminence." (Col. 1:18). Now from these passages of scripture we learn that the Lord has all authority and preeminence in religious matters.

If Christ is the head of the church, having the last word in matters pertaining to the salvation of the soul, then what man has the right to push the Son of God aside, taking his place? Not a soul, and yet you know as well as I do that the Pope, and others, have attempted to do that very thing. But be it remembered that the Lord is still the head of his church. Read Eph. 5.

Coming now to the New Testament, we are informed that it is the last will and testament of our Lord. (Heb. 9). This being the case, we are not to say anything or do anything, religiously speaking, that cannot be backed with a "thus saith the Lord." But once more, we know that a many a man has gone beyond the will of God. There are those who teach that one church is as good as another. Others tell us that faith only saves. Still others declare that baptism doesn't save. But I am asking in relation to these doctrines, as well as other man-made doctrines : By what authority? If they are not authorized by the word of God, and they are not, then they are nothing more than false doctrines—Avoid them!

GREAT THINGS

The world has many great things to offer. As an individual travels over the country, on entering certain cities he'll notice a sign advertising the fact that this is the home of the world's largest this or the world's greatest thus and so. Likewise, there are many great things listed in the Bible.

God is the greatest being or personality in all the world. Moses introduces his power in the physical realm in Gen. 1:1; and Christ depicts his great love for the soul of man in John 3:16. Christ is the greatest sacrifice ever offered on man's behalf. The Bible tells us that "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8).

The soul is man's greatest possession. To bring this truth out, the Lord submits this important question : "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for the soul?" (Matt. 16:26). The gospel contains the greatest power. It has the power to save the soul. (Rom. 1:16).

The blood is the world's greatest cleaner. If contacted it will wash away sin. According to Acts 22:16 this comes about though the act of baptism. The church is the greatest institution in all the world. This is true inasmuch as Christ established it and it is composed of the saved. (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47).

The name Christian is the greatest name one can wear. To take the name Christian means that one is following in the steps of Christ, yea, wearing the name of Christ. Salvation is in this name. (Acts 11:26; Acts 4:12).

In studying the Bible you'll find many other great things mentioned. One of them would be the Bible itself—the greatest book ever written.

WHY READ THE BIBLE?

There is so much to read, so much to see, so much to do. The question comes, why read the Bible? There are many good reasons why one should read God's word.

The Bible is a readable book. It is simple and understandable, interpreting itself. The scriptures picture the past, present, and the future. It contains a variety of stories—of love, of war, of heroes, etc. Regardless of one's occupation or interest, he'll find the Bible rewarding by feasting on its sacred contents.

Above all, the word of God should be read because it contains the plan of salvation. It tells man the condition he is in and what he can do about it. Man is a sinner and can be saved only through following the instructions of the written word. James exhorts, "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." (James 1:21). But what does the word say? Listen to Christ, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mk. 16:16).

The Christian should read the Bible to learn how to live and serve God. Peter says that the young babe in Christ should partake of the milk of the word, that he might grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. (1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18). But why? To become strong in the Lord. (Eph. 6:10). Christ says that one should hunger and thirst after righteousness. (Matt. 5:6). Likewise, Paul invites all to study for the purpose of being approved of God. (2 Tim. 2:15).

If you want to read the world's greatest book, read the Bible. Friend, if you want to be saved then follow its instructions. It

is man's road map from this life to the new Jerusalem. (Rev. 21:2; 22:14).

THE CHRISTIAN GRACES

The Bible clearly teaches that one must obey the gospel of Christ in order to be saved. (Mk. 16:15,16). But a question : Is this all one must do? A thousand times, no! True, obedience to the gospel washes away one's past sins but this is not enough. Upon being added to the church he must live the faithful Christian life. (Acts 2:42). This, and only this, will bring a crown of life. (Rev. 2:10).

On turning to 2 Pet. 1:4-11 you will find what is usually spoken of as the "Christian graces." You will also observe that these qualities must be added to the Christian's faith. First, there is virtue; this term denotes strength, power, and courage. Second, there is knowledge; this has reference to understanding, information, etc. Third, we come to temperance; this is nothing more than self-control or self-restraint. Fourth, we have patience: it is simply defined forbearance, endurance, longsuffering, and so on. Fifth, comes godliness; calling to mind purity, holiness, and reverence. Sixth, there is brotherly kindness; this point exemplifies the fact that we must "let brotherly love continue." Seventh, and last, we are faced with charity; this word spells love, kindness, goodness, etc. Now a question : How could one live the Christian life apart from these characteristics? Why it would be an impossibility, for in the same setting Peter emphatically says that "he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off," but he that doeth these things "shall never fall."

The Christian life is not a life of ease—it is very demanding.

The Lord will not accept second best. Thus, he asks that we put God first, offering our bodies as living sacrifices. (Matt. 6:33, Rom. 12:1).

“LIVING RELIGIONS”

What is religion? It is service, praise, adoration, and reverence rendered and shown through worship. Now when we think of religion we invariably think of Christianity, but did you know that there are ten living religions throughout the world? By living religions, I mean that they are alive and active today.

The religions that I refer to are as follows:

1. **Buddhism.** It was founded by Buddha many years before Christ and still flourishes throughout central and eastern Asia. These adherents are strong believers in transmigration.
2. **Hinduism.** “The native religious and social system of India.”
3. **Zoroastrianism.** It takes its name from its founder, Zoroaster. Going back before Christ, it was the religion of Persia.
4. **Shintoism.** The religion of Japan, with emphasis on ancestor worship.
5. **Toaism.** Founded by Lao-tzu, “a religion and philosophy of China.”
6. **Confucianism.** It covers “the ethics of Confucius and

his disciples.”

7. **Jainism.** An eastern religion, with great respect for animals.
8. **Islam.** With Mohammed as founder and prophet, it has spread throughout the Middle East.
9. **Judaism.** Followers of the Law of Moses, composed mostly of Jews.
10. **Christianity.** Founded by Christ, it is known the world over.

There are many religions but there is only one true religion—the religion of Christ. Who will dare deny it?

In the light of what has been said, who will say that one religion is as good as another? Friend, be careful, you are treading on dangerous ground.

PROPER USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

There are those who accept the Old Testament to the exclusion of the New, but I am sure that the majority of you will agree with me when I say that both the Old Testament and the New Testament are inspired of God. I base this on the language of the apostle Paul, when he said, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” (2 Tim. 3:16). The apostle also emphasizes the importance of rightly dividing the word. (2 Tim. 2:15).

Although the Old Testament is the word of God this does not mean that it is binding on us. We read where Christ nailed

the law to the cross, thus presenting a new covenant. (Col. 2:14; Heb. 9). Why should anyone want to go back to the law of Moses when we have the law of Christ? (John 1:17).

Please consider some wrong uses of the Old Testament : One wrong use is where people endeavour to keep the law. (Gal. 5:4). Another is, trying to bind the law on others . (Acts 15:1). Still another is misapplying Old Testament prophecies. (Matt. 5:17, 18). Then another is, using the Old Testament to annul certain New Testament truths, such as the act of baptism, etc. (Heb. 5: 8, 9). And finally, using the Old Testament to try to justify unscriptural practices, as sprinkling, tithing, and so on. (Col. 2:12; 1 Cor. 16:2).

But there are proper ways of using the Old Testament. For instance, Christ himself suggested that we should search the scriptures. (John 5:39). Too, one may study the Old Testament for the purpose of learning more about certain themes such as the creation and the kingdom. (Gen. 1:1; Isa. 2). But one of the finest reasons for studying the Old Testament is because it is written for our learning, for our example. (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10).

LIMITATIONS OF PRAYER

No doubt about it, prayer will do many things. This has been proven time and time again. But, be not deceived, prayer has its limitations. This is what the Bible teaches.

Prayer will not take the place of obedience. The Bible nowhere teaches that all a person must do to be saved is to merely pray to God for forgiveness. On the other hand, the Lord has said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter

into the kingdom of heaven : but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 7:21).

Prayer will not eliminate work. An individual may pray and pray but in order for the gospel to be preached, a meeting house built, and so on, he must get out and go to work. Of course, prayer will do much toward accomplishing a task but it will not take the place of physical labor. (James 2).

Prayer will not substitute for what one can do. Prayer may be important but so is the individual. One cannot substitute for the other. Both have a work to do and must do that work. (Lk. 18:1; 1 John 1:7).

Prayer will not bring about a miracle. A many a soul honestly believes that prayer will bring about a miracle but such is not the case. Yes, pray for the sick but don't expect a miracle. If you do, you'll be disappointed. (Matt. 9:12).

Prayer will not do anything alone. Too many pray but never get around to the place of putting forth an effort for themselves. For instance, if you refuse to work for a living, don't expect the Lord to cover your table with good food on the basis of prayer. (1 Tim. 5:8).

Friends, prayer has its place. The Bible teaches that we should pray but that we should pray according to his will. (1 Thess. 5:17; 1 John 5:14). The wise recognize what prayer will and will not do.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

There are many churches but there is one true church; there

are many bodies but there is one true body; there are many organizations but there is one true organization—the church of Christ. This is the church that you can read about in the Bible; verily this is the church the Lord will return for.

The church of Christ is non-denominational and non-sectarian; it is neither Protestant, Jewish, nor Catholic; it endeavours to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. (Rev. 22:18, 19).

The Lord's church is that church which he promised to build; it was established on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 33; it is the spiritual body of Christ. (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2; 1 Cor. 12:27).

The Lord's church is the one body of the scriptures; it recognizes Christ as its head; it acknowledges him as its saviour; it is a blood bought institution. (Eph. 4:4; Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23; Acts 20:28).

The church of Christ is composed of people who have obeyed his will; it honors the name of Christ; it accepts the Lord's plan of scriptural organization; it engages in the greatest work on earth; it worships God in spirit and in truth; it practices pure New Testament Christianity. (Mk. 16:15, 16; Acts 2:47; Rom. 16:16; 1 Tim. 3; Matt. 28:18-20; John 4:24; Rev. 2:10).

You are invited to give a great deal of thought to these statements, and along with it, visit the church of Christ in your community. The Lord's people have nothing to hide, but we encourage you to investigate us that you might have the facts as they are.

THE SAFE WAY

We hear a lot these days about safety. Various mediums are used to suggest that the individual should be cautious in his driving, careful about the house, etc. Then there is "National Safety Day," "Fire Prevention Week," and so on. All of this is good, but why not show the same interest in spiritual matters? If there is a safe course in the material world, shouldn't there be one in the spiritual realm?

There are many man-made bodies and organizations but there is only one true church. Now why take a chance? Why become a member of some denomination when you can be a member of the Lord's church? (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47).

Many will tell you that sprinkling or pouring is as much a baptism as immersion. But here's the real difference : Sprinkling and pouring are nowhere mentioned in God's word as baptism, but immersion is spoken of time and time again as the one baptism of the New Testament. Now why take a chance? Why have a little water sprinkled or poured on your head when you can be scripturally buried in it? (Col. 2:12).

It is said that there's nothing in a name, that one name is as good as another. But why take a chance? Why wear a man-made name or title when you can wear the name of Christ? Especially so, since the scriptures teach that salvation is in that name. (Acts 4:12).

There are those who argue that singing should be accompanied by mechanical music. But why take a chance? Why add the mechanical part when the word of God teaches that the Lord's people should sing, thus making the melody in the heart? (Eph. 5:19).

I am asking again, why take a chance? There is safe course to take on every spiritual matter. Take the safe way and stay on the right road.

“A PECULIAR PEOPLE”

In speaking of the people of God, Peter said, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Pet. 2:9). Special attention is called to the fact that Christians are a peculiar people. Now this doesn’t mean that they are peculiar because they wear a certain type of uniform, etc., but it does mean that they are different from the world, inasmuch as they believe God’s word and endeavor to abide by the same.

The Lord’s people are members of a peculiar church. Christ is recognized as its founder. (Matt. 16:18). He is also accepted as being the saviour of the church, as well as being its head. (Eph. 5:23). Moreover, its members uphold it as being the one church of the Bible. (Eph. 4:4).

Christian people participate in a peculiar worship. The Lord’s Supper is observed each first day of the week. (Acts 20:7). Mechanical instruments of music are never used and each member gives as he has been propered. (Eph. 5:19; 1 Cor. 16:2).

Children of God are peculiar in name. Man-made names and titles are rejected entirely. (1 Co. 1). Each member wears the name Christian, and the name Christian only. (Acts 11:26).

God’s people are peculiar in practice. Worldliness is pushed aside while righteousness is exemplified, with emphasis placed on

pure religion. (1 John 2:15-17; Col. 3:17; James 1:27).

Yes, the Lord's people are a peculiar people. But if you will investigate you will find that this is not a life to be shunned, but one to be sought after.

TODAY

There are those who live in the past—reliving those times gone by. There there are others who live in the future—continually day-dreaming of things to come. But the wise person recognizes the importance of the present—realizing that it is that which is done today that will count tomorrow.

The Bible teaches that we should hear the Lord **TODAY** : “Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness : When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.” (Heb. 3:7-9).

The scriptures tell us that we should obey God **TODAY** : “(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee : behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation).” (2 Cor. 6:2).

The Hebrew writer suggests that we should exhort others **TODAY** : “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” (Heb. 3:12, 13).

The Lord taught that one should work **TODAY** : “But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first,

and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard.” (Matt. 21:28).

James warns of boasting of **TODAY**: “Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain : Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” (James 4:13, 14).

Someone has said : “Only one life, and it will soon be past; only what’s done for Christ will last.”

WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

Who is a Christian? Is he different from other people? Can just anybody be a Christian? What kind of life does he lead? How may an individual become one? These and other questions are often asked in regard to that person who wears the name of Christ.

First of all, let it be understood that all ‘good moral people’ aren’t Christians. Beyond a shadow of doubt one must be morally good to be a Christian, but morality alone does not mark one as such. Read Acts 10.

In the next place, keep in mind that all religious people aren’t Christians. Large masses of people are religious but they aren’t God’s people for the simple reason that they have been deceived in spiritual matters. Read Matt. 15:9.

But who is a Christian? A Christian is that one who has obeyed the gospel of Christ through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism (Mk. 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:10); That

one who has been added to the Lord's church (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47); that one who wears the name of Christ (1 Pet. 4:6); that person who worships God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24); and that person who lives a godly, consecrated life in the service of his Master. (Tit. 2:11, 12; Rev. 2:10). Yes, it takes all of this to make a New Testament Christian. This is what it took in apostolic days and if truth made Christians then, the same truth will make the same kind of Christians now.

Are you a Christian according to the words of inspiration? If you aren't, then become one. God will accept no less.

ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN?

Are you a Christian? Have you obeyed the gospel? Can you truthfully say that the Lord added you to his church? Are you wearing the name of Christ, and that name only? Do you worship the Lord each first day of the week? Are you living a faithful Christian life? Friend, if you are a child of God, you can say yes to every one of these questions. However, if you must answer no to even one of them, it means that you are not a true disciple of the Lord. Take inventory and see where you stand.

Remember, you may claim to be a Christian but that doesn't mean anything necessarily. One may say that he is a Prime Minister but unless he really is, he's fooling no one but self. Thus it takes more than merely making a claim.

I also remind you of the fact that it takes more than joining a church to be a Christian. Churches these days are numerous. They are to be found everywhere. Yes, it is important that one be a member of the church, the right church, the Lord's church. (Eph. 4:4). All others are man-made, and therefore stand con-

demned.

But someone says, "I give to the poor and help the orphans." Friend, you may have given your money to the Lord but you are the one he's really interested in. We must present our very beings to the Lord as a living sacrifice in order to please him.

I ask again, are you a Christian? Don't you want to be saved and have the hope of heaven? I beg of you then to become a child of God that you may know the real joy and blessings that come from such a life.

WHY AREN'T YOU A CHRISTIAN?

Think of all that has been done in order that you might be a Christian. God sent his Son; Christ died on the cross; the apostles preached the gospel and penned the word at the risk of losing their lives; yes, much has been done, and continues to be done, in order that you might have the privilege of obeying your Maker. If such be true, and it is, then why aren't you a Christian?

Could it be that you are ungrateful for all that has been done? Have you forgotten the Lord's sacrifice on your behalf? Don't you know that you are lost, and that you will remain lost until you obey the gospel? (Mk. 16:16; Rom. 1:16, 17).

Are you depending on your own goodness to take you to heaven? If you are then you have been deceived. The Bible teaches that man is lost without God. Regardless of your good works, it takes the grace of God to save one. But how can one contact that grace? Through faith and obedience. (Eph. 2:8, 9; Heb. 5:8, 9).

Do you think you are a Christian while wearing some man-made name or title? If you do then you need to restudy your situation. Friend, you just can't wear the Lord's name and a sectarian title too. You must make up your mind who you are going to serve and drop the other one. Remember, the Lord wants all of you or none at all. (1 Pet. 4:16).

Why aren't you a Christian? You can be one. It's so simple. All you have to do is to believe the Lord, repent of your sins, confess your faith in Christ, and be baptized for the remission of sins. By meeting these conditions of pardon you are not only made a Christian but you are added to the Lord's church. Yes, you can live the Christian life. All it takes is faith and determination.

WITH BIBLES, BUT LOST

The Bible is the world's best seller, but man as a whole is still lost. The Holy Scripture has been translated, printed, and distributed among many races but the gospel by no means has been taken to every nation. Although God's word may be found in many homes in this great land, nevertheless, the majority are ignorant of its contents.

In the light of the foregoing, you can see why it is not enough to possess a Bible. Certainly you need a Bible, but it's not going to do much for you as long as it's just collecting dust. To get the most from it you must read and study it and make up your mind that you are going to do what it says.

The world is where it is now, not because of a lack of Bibles, but because of a lack of study and application. The truth makes one free but one must first have a knowledge of the truth. (John

8:32). Thus, Paul has exhorted us to study. (2 Tim. 2:15). Christ tells us to "Search the scriptures." (John 5:39). Again he has said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. 4:4).

Do you have a Bible? If so, have you been, and are you, following its instructions? Unless you can answer in the affirmative, you are still lost. Don't worry about what others have said or what you think. Just do what it teaches. In this way you are right whether others are or not. Remember, too, the Bible is your road map now but one day it will be your judge.

"THE MOURNER'S BENCH"

Not long ago I heard a preacher speaking on the subject, "Bring Back The Mourner's Bench," but let me ask : Where did it come from and where has it gone? I do not read where Peter or any of the other apostles ever exhorted any body to come to the mourner's bench. This was an unheard of thing in apostolic days.

During the past summer I visited several revival campaigns going on throughout the particular area in which I live. I found about the same at each place : An emotionally disturbed group of people, all kind of instruments being played and beat upon, a preacher frantically declaring the power of God, with an invitation for the sinner to come to the mourner's bench for the purpose of praying through. I asked a number of these preachers why they didn't tell the sinner to repent and be baptized just like Peter did on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:38). I explained that if a sinner could be saved on the day of Pentecost by simply following Peter's instructions, why wouldn't it work today? But you know, those men never did answer me. Some of them did

manage to say, "It's different now." But why is it different now? I think you know as well as I know, it's simply because man has departed from God's word.

Friends, the mourner's bench was born with man and therefore will die with him. Although some religious bodies may have dropped it, many others continue to glorify it. This very thing will damn many a soul. Why? Because honest and sincere souls go there to pray their sins away when the Bible teaches one to arise and be baptized in order to have sins washed away. (Acts 22:16). If you want to be saved, follow the instructions of God's word. This is the only right way.

"CALLED TO PREACH"

Have you ever heard a preacher say, "The Lord called me to preach." I have many times, but what are they saying? They are suggesting that the Lord directly and miraculously called them into the ministry. Some of them go so far as to say that they were not able to read and write, but after being called, all of their obstacles disappeared.

Let me say just here that such souls have been misled and deceived, and in their enthusiasm for preaching are only exaggerating the interests and feelings that led them to make their final decision. As far as the Lord telling anyone in an audible voice, "Go Preach," why it is out of the question. Then God of heaven did speak directly to man in days of old, **BUT** you can be assured he doesn't anymore. In our times he speaks to us through his word. (Heb. 1:1, 2; James 1:22). An individual may get emotionally disturbed, have a dream, day dream, etc., and think the Lord is speaking to him in "a wee small voice," but the real thing never happens. If it did God would be obligated to speak

to all of us in like manner, since he is no respecter of persons. But if that should happen, the Bible would no longer be considered as God's complete and final revelation to man. So you see when one gets away from the truth, all kind of problems and questions begin to pop up. Hence, let's believe God's word over the imaginations, theories, doctrines, and so on, of man.

Yes, one is called to preach. However, this is not done in a miraculous way but through the word. Paul says, "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 2:14). The Lord says, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mk. 16: 15). Therefore, if one has the ability to proclaim the word he is expected to do so.

PREACHING

Preaching renders a vital service in the religion of Christ; it is the backbone of the church; it plays a unique role in the conversion of the soul; yea, it is all of this and more.

There is a lot of preaching being done, perhaps more than ever before. However, the world is still ignorant of God's will, divided, and lost: What's wrong? Too much of the wrong kind of preaching.

Some times people get the idea that all preaching does good, but this is not the case. When the preaching is based on the ideas, theories, creeds, manuals, disciplines, and dogmas of men it can have only a dangerous effect on its hearers.

Scriptural preaching will not confuse, bewilder, divide, and destroy; rather it will inform, enlighten, save, and unite those

who hear it and obey it.

Christ said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but preach what? Preach the gospel. Please note, the gospel must be preached if souls are to be saved.

In speaking to the young preacher Timothy, Paul said, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (2 Tim. 4: 2). But what does it mean to preach the word? It means to preach the gospel, the truth, the word of God; to give a "thus saith the Lord" for everything that is taught. Remember, it is the truth and only the truth that makes free. (John 8:32).

THE PREACHER

Have you ever given much thought to the preacher? To the work that he does? To his duties and responsibilities, and so on? If you haven't, then you need to do so.

This is suggested because far too many misunderstand the preacher. For example, a multitude of people have the idea that he is called in some miraculous way; that he sets himself up as being a perfect man; that he dictates to his hearers; that he is in the work for the money that he can get out of it; that he is one that is to be tolerated rather than accepted for what he is, etc.

No doubt about it, there are preachers who are sorry, and no good. But this does not mean that all preachers are of this type. Christ was a preacher, and so were the apostles. Hence, one has nothing to be ashamed of as long as he is walking in the steps of Christ and the faithful of old.

To clear up some misconceptions of a preacher, let it be understood that he is not called in a miraculous way. The Bible teaches that he is called by the gospel. (2 Thess. 2:14). In other words, one is called through the gospel to be a Christian. After obeying the truth, if he has a desire to proclaim the word, and has the ability to go along with it, he is commanded to “go preach.” (Mk. 16:15). Another thing, the preacher is no more perfect than any other Christian and neither does he have the authority to dictate. (1 John 1:8; Matt. 28:18, 19). Furthermore, his mission is not to preach for money but rather out of a love for lost souls. Any other purpose would be damnable.

The gospel preacher plays a great role in the work of the church; the truth must be declared if souls are to be harvested unto the Lord. (Rom. 10:17; Mk. 16:15, 16).

WHY TAKE A CHANCE?

If someone offered you a choice of taking a fresh new piece of paper money or a check written out for the same amount, which would you take? Of course, you would take the cash. But why? Because you know it is the wisest thing to do. Why fool with a check, taking a chance on it bouncing, etc., when cash is available?

If a doctor offered you a choice of taking a prescribed medicine in order that you might live or going on without it and risking death, what would your decision be? You know what you would do—you would follow the doctor's instructions. Certainly you would not want to risk your life.

Now friend, if you would not take a chance on the material and physical things of life, why take a chance with the spiritual?

Why take a chance with your soul? Why listen to man when you can follow God's instructions? (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Why join a man-made church when you can become a member of the church which Christ himself established? (Matt. 16:18). Why wear a sectarian name when you can wear the Lord's name? (1 Pet. 4:16). Why worship God according to the doctrines and commandments of men when you can worship the Lord in spirit and in truth? (John 4:24). Why say that there are many ways to heaven when the scriptures reveal that there is only one way? (John 14:6). Why take a chance on these things?

So many are taking a chance with their soul. What about you? Don't you know that there is a safe course in religion just as there is in anything else? Then why not take it? Man's way is doubtful but God's way is sure.

EASTER

Easter is an annual religious festival which is celebrated by the majority of Catholic and Protestant bodies. It is based on the fact that Christ was resurrected from the dead at this time.

This season is accompanied in many countries by spring fashions, the Easter bunny and eggs, the lily, parades, worship, etc., and so on.

The word "Easter" is to be found only one time in the scriptures and the reference is Acts 12:4. The revised version renders it "the passover," which is the correct translation.

The Bible does not reveal the specific date of the Lord's resurrection. It does tell us that he arose on the first day of the week. (Matt. 28:1). Thus, it is not necessary for us to know

the day, month, and year of his resurrection—just the fact that he arose.

God has ordained the first day of the week as the day to honor the resurrection. Not just one day out of a year, but every Lord's day. (Acts 20:7).

It is absurd and foolish to glorify such a period of time as Easter. But why? Simply because it originated with man and it is all to his honor and glory. God is not glorified in it all, but humiliated; he is not exalted, but abased. When man drifts off after the traditions and customs that are associated with Easter, you can mark it down that God is far from it.

Friend, be not deceived. Return to the Bible plan of doing things. Honor God and his ways and he will richly bless you.

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AND TITLES

The present religious world is like the sects of the Lord's day—it has heaped upon itself titles, names, customs, traditions, and the doctrines and commandments of men. All of this has been done to exalt, honor, and glorify itself.

With the majority of the religious bodies there is so much organization and ecclesiasticism that it would take a wise man indeed to trace the many avenues and channels through which it operates. These hierarchies or systems of faith range in actual makeup from "Popes, Cardinals, and Bishops to the Lay Members."

Singling out one particular denomination, we note a Bishop or President serving as its head; it has headquarters, in most cases, in one of the larger cities; it has councils, boards, conven-

tions, etc., to decide the goals, policies, and doctrines of the church; it has colleges, seminaries, and sometimes universities; and it has many congregations and preachers operating within its boundaries.

Taking a closer look at a denominational preacher, we observe in most cases that he is an educated man; that he takes great pride in wearing such titles as Doctor, Reverend, Pastor, and Elder. In all probability his preference is "Reverened," and some go on to refer to him as "the most Reverend," or "the most right Reverend."

The foregoing has been a picture of the modern day religious world. Now what does the Bible say about organization, titles, etc? God's word tells us that there is but one church, Christ is its head, heaven is its headquarters, and its members are to be servants. Each congregation is to be complete within itself with its own elders and deacons. This is the extent of scriptural church government. Read Eph. 4, 5, 1 Tim 3, and Acts 20:28.

As to the preacher, he is but an evangelist, or minister. He has no right whatsoever to the titles of Reverend, Pastor, Elder, Father or Rabbi.

Remember, Jesus said, "Be not ye called Rabbi : for one is your Master : even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth : for one is your Father, which is in heaven." (Matt. 23:8, 9).

"LAY MEMBERS"

It has come to be a common thing to hear the "church member" talk about "lay members." This is an accepted ex-

pression both in the Catholic and Protestant churches. But where did such terminology come from? It originated with the Catholic church, later to be borrowed by the denominational world. What does one mean when he talks about "lay members?" He is simply making a distinction between the membership and the preacher or leaders of a particular church. Is this a scriptural expression? It is not.

This is but one more example to show you how over a period of time man has drifted away from the Bible to pick up new ideas, doctrines, and practices that are wholly unscriptural. This should behoove us to investigate every thing that we say or do, to see if it is in harmony with the will of God. If it is, fine. If it is not, we must abandon it.

The Bible nowhere talks about "lay members." Rather the scriptures speak of the Lord's people as being Christians, children of God, saints, disciples, servants, etc. Christ, in speaking to his followers, says, "...and all ye are brethren." (Matt. 23:8).

Truly, all of God's people are brethren. There is none of this "better than thou" spirit. Christ is no respecter of persons. He loves all and wants to save all. Woe be to that one who would deny such a truth.

If there is such a thing as a "lay member." it is simply because he "lays around" and won't do anything! But any way you look at it, such a person would be an hindrance to the cause of Christ.

A DECISION FOR CHRIST

Much has been said about making a decision for Christ.

Preachers all over the country have encouraged their audience to take a stand for the Lord. The general idea is that one is to mentally accept Christ as the Son of God. In some cases such a resolution is followed by a confession with the mouth and the acceptance of some human religious organization. But is all of this in harmony with New Testament conversion? We shall see.

On turning to God's word we find no comfort for modern day religious practitioners as before mentioned. For example, in Acts 2, we do not find Peter pleading for the people to merely acknowledge in their hearts that Jesus was the Son of God. Rather, he exhorted and encouraged them to take definite steps in order to be forgiven of their sins. They were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins.

Neither do we find Peter telling them that since they have been saved they are to go home and join the church of their choice, the one that will suit them the most. No, Peter did not advise them to do this and had he done so he would have been making a great mistake, for there was only one church in existence! The record goes on to show that when they were baptized they were added to the church. But who's church? Christ's, of course. The Lord said that he would build his church. (Matt. 16:18). He kept that promise on the day of Pentecost, so therefore, he added the saved to his church.

You are encouraged to make a decision for Christ. But don't stop with faith only. Show your faith through obedience. Follow the examples as recorded in the book of Acts. If you will, you'll not regret it.

"MY CHURCH"

I am frank to admit that I don't have a church. I have never

had one and do not anticipate one in the future. Even if I did have one it wouldn't be worth anything because I couldn't save it and it couldn't save me. Yes, I am a member of a church but it is not mine. It belongs to Christ and I am thankful to God that it does. I wouldn't want to be a member of any other body or institution.

What about you? Do you have a church? If so, where did you get it and what are you going to do with it? Whose name is it wearing, and why? Can you read about your church in God's word? If you can't, how can you know that it is of God? Why not compare your's with the one that is set forth in the holy scriptures?

Jesus said, after Peter had confessed him as being the Son of God, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18). According to this statement then, the church belongs to the Lord. But if the church belongs to him, and he has only one, what about your church and all others? It just means that there is but one true church in contrast to the many counterfeit churches and religious organizations all over the country. Regardless of what man says, the Bible still teaches that there is but one church and that church belongs to Christ.

What are you going to do? Will you settle for an imitation, a counterfeit church, or are you going to demand the genuine, and the church that you can read about in the New Testament? Why join a man-made organization when you can be member of a divine institution? Think it over.

BABIES ARE SAFE

A baby is born into this world pure and spotless. It is without sin altogether. Should it die, it would go home to dwell with God.

Jesus said, concerning little children, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:3). According to some, babies are born sinners. But if this be true then Christ is advocating that his disciples should become sinners, and that they must become that in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven. However, this will not work. The Lord was only emphasizing the fact that children are without sin and that his disciples must likewise be without sin in order to enjoy the blessings of heaven.

Furthermore, if a child is without sin, it stands to reason that there is no cause for his being baptized, since baptism is far the purpose of washing away sin. (Acts 22:16). Still another reason why a baby is not a fit subject for baptism is the fact that scriptural immersion must be preceded by genuine faith (Mk. 16: 16), but how can a baby truly believe when it is not yet old enough to distinguish right from wrong? The point is, there is no scriptural authority for baptizing infants.

Now after the child has reached the age of accountability, it is a different matter. It is at this point in his life that he becomes a sinner (Rom. 3:23), and therefore stands in need of a Saviour. (Rom. 5:8). In submitting to the will of the Lord, he repents and is baptized for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38). But remember that the Bible makes a distinction between infants and accountable beings.

DEDICATING CHILDREN

It is wonderful to see parents who think so much of their children that they will take them to worship, teach them to pray, and so on, but it is certainly foreign to the scriptures to dedicate children in the sense of having them “christened” or having some other “church service” for the purpose of “sanctifying” them. One of the most pitful things is to witness a little child being “baptized,” to know that it knows nothing about what is taking place, but is simply having something forced upon it.

In the first place, it is unscriptural to “christen” or to “baptize” babies. The Bible teaches that one must be an accountable being before God in order to be baptized. Christ said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved : but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mk. 16:16).

In the second place, “christening” or “sprinkling” is far from being Bible baptism. The apostle Paul tells us that true baptism is a burial (Col. 2:12), and that it is a burial in water. (Acts 8). But isn't there more than one? No. The same apostle says that there is but one baptism. (Eph. 4:5).

And finally, an injustice is done to the individual in a permanent way. He grows up feeling that he has already met the requirements of salvation, being a member of the Lord's church, etc. No telling how many souls will be lost because of this one thing.

If you want to dedicate your child to the Lord, rear him in such a way that he will respect his God and will obey the truths of the Bible at the proper time.